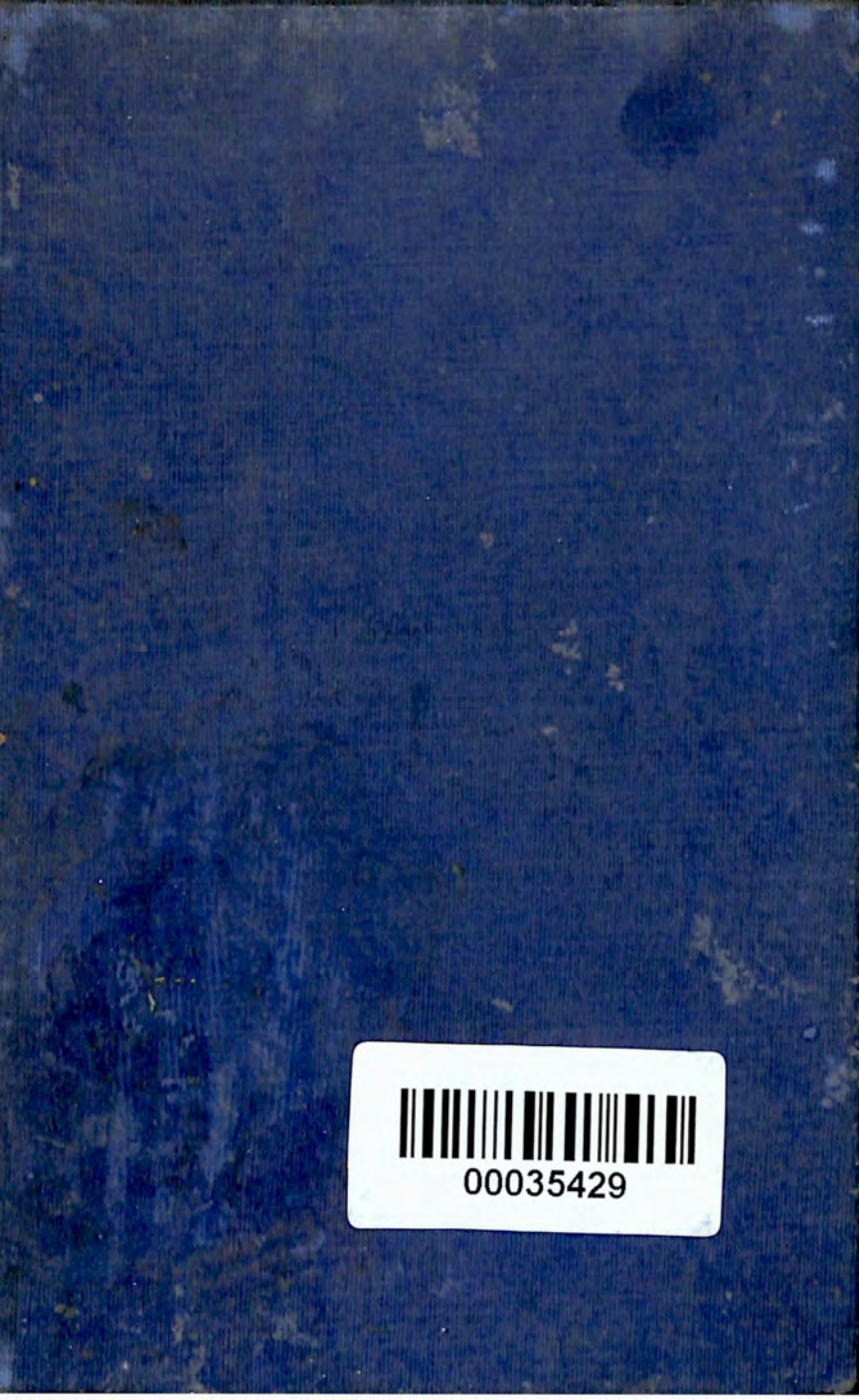
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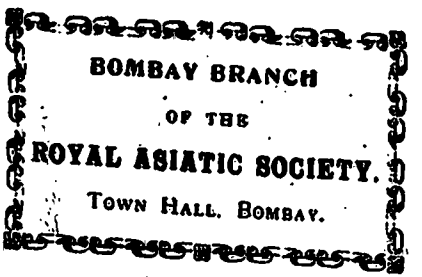

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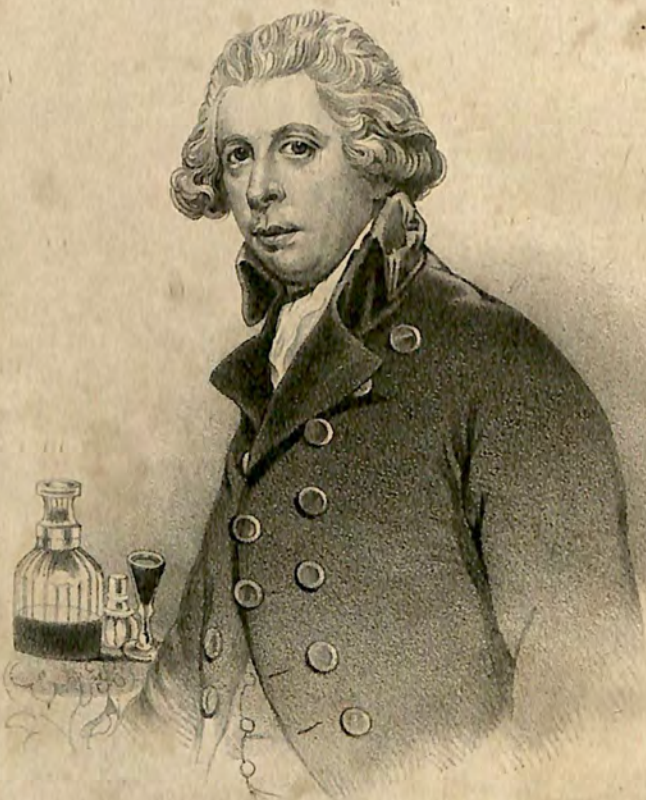

R. B. Sheridan.

London, Published by J. F. Hope, 16, Gt Marlborough Street.

SHERIDAN AND HIS TIMES.

BY

An Octogenarian,

WHO STOOD BY HIS KNEE IN YOUTH AND SAT AT HIS TABLE IN MANHOOD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ac

VOL. I.

"Whatever Sheridan has done, or chosen to do, has been *par excellence* always the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy, the best opera, the best farce (it is only too good for a farce), and the best address—the monologue on Garrick. And to crown all, delivered the very best oration, the famous Begum Speech, ever conceived, or heard in this country." BYRON.

"Such was Sheridan! He could soften an Attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus." BYRON.

LONDON:
J. F. HOPE, 16, GT. MARLBOROUGH STREET.
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LONDON: J. F. HOPE, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

DEDICATED,

BY PERMISSION,

TO THE HONOURABLE MRS. NORTON.

To whom could these volumes be inscribed with so much propriety as to a Sheridan, the daughter of a Sheridan, and grand-daughter of THE Sheridan—the Poet, Dramatist, Senator, and Orator—in all excelling?

To one, then, who received as her inheritance the distinguished talent of her sire, and whose several productions partake of his inspirations—to her who, inheriting the many virtues and accomplishments of an Elizabeth Linley, the adored and inestimable wife of him from whom she derives her lineage—these pages are respectfully inscribed, as a tribute to her worth, her genius, and the name she honours, by

THE AUTHOR.

T T 9 12

PREFACE.

HAD any pen more powerful than my own undertaken to rescue the name of Sheridan from the misrepresentations of his biographers, this book would never have appeared.

To faithfully record that extraordinary man in the several stages of his life, and furnish an adequate idea of his peculiarities, the flow of his wit, and his elegant accomplishments, it were necessary to know him, and to know him intimately. His portrait could not be sketched from the productions of his pen, and the limner would fail in his likeness drawn from the reports of his oratory.

Watkins knew him only in the parliamentary reports, and then only in scrutiny of his politics —to deal tenderly with this practical professor of the art of book-making; Colburn, the bookseller, wanted a life of Sheridan; he (Colburn) knew that Thomas Moore was engaged in the same undertak-

ing, but he wanted a life of Sheridan to be brought out immediately; and Watkins was the undertaker. Thus Moore was anticipated, and the market was supplied; but Watkins knew nothing whatever of Sheridan only as in a state of political antagonism to his own opinions; thus all his impressions were left-handed, and all his deductions similarly oblique in vision. Any tale adapting itself to his scheme of narration was eagerly sought, and in the search for authorities, mere fabrications were quoted AS AUTHORITIES.

Not so Moore; he took a higher ground. He had undertaken the work by contract with his publishers, without limitation as to time, and took *nine* years to complete it. He had at command materials enough to satisfy his wants from all quarters from which the substance of a book could be gleaned; with selections from all the documents, papers, correspondence, and miscellanies of the deceased, left at his disposal to enliven its pages and furnish the food necessary to stricture and critical inquiry. We do not propose to pass an opinion in this place on the merits of his compilation, the shrewdness of his suggestions, or the soundness of his judgment; not questioning the ability he has displayed, we shall confine ourselves

to the point wherein we disagree with Mr. Moore in what we consider should form the constituents of a work on biography. We cannot bring ourselves to the conclusion that a critique on the merits and defects of the works of an author are the guides by which we are to be led to an estimate of his character; they may influence our opinion on the question of his genius, but furnish us with small opportunity of judgment on his moral worth, and frequently a very incorrect idea of the dispositions of the man placed under review.

It is the life of the man—how spent—by what circumstances controlled; for circumstances must and will control the mind in its development, and produce those events which are considered as the mere accidents of life. One anecdote is worth a world of disquisition; it is by anecdote we arrive at the circumstance—the wit-energy or capacity of the mind in its then state of actual development; nor can we arrive at a likeness of Sheridan by any other means.

The author, in the construction of his "Life and Times of Sheridan," has quoted all the established and reliable authorities, which have been equally available to Watkins and Moore.

So much of his history as relates to periods before his acquaintance with Sheridan, which was commenced in the year 1790, is composed of these memorials, confirmed by narrations from Sheridan himself, and conversations held at different periods even to the close of his days.

It must be noted that the author was only in the eleventh year of his age when first introduced into the family of Sheridan, the junior of Mr. Thomas Sheridan, his only son, by about four years. He was in the thirteenth at the time of the death of Mrs. Sheridan; all the rest will be developed in the course of the work. It may be but fair to remark that the volumes before the reader were produced in a sick chamber, under distressing circumstances of health, and that they have not been subjected to a fair revision; but they will be judged for themselves, and apology will avail but little in arrest of judgment.

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SHERIDAN AND HIS TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

Biography is History. The memoirs of our Statesmen form the chronicle of the times in which they lived: the manners of the age: the impulses of the people: and the general condition of society. Imperfect, therefore, must our estimate be of the subject of this memoir unless we associate him with the elements in which he moved and breathed, and by which he was so powerfully governed.

The qualities of the mind, in their natural development, are intuitively fitted to the age in which they are exhibited; and so adjust themselves to the conventionalities of life in its party spirit or its prevailing sentiment; adhering no less so, in its inclinations, to the domestic habits and pursuits of a people; living in an age when inebriety was scarcely considered as a vice, and hospitality demanded it as a tribute.

Happily those times have passed away, and its pernicious practices abolished; in the onward march of progress, which looks back upon the past in reproof, and the future in hope.

The social habits have changed—the customs, manners—all, all have changed! leaving scarcely a remnant of their existence, since that period, when Richard Brinsley Sheridan entered into the political arena, in the fervor of youth, in the glow of health; and in the manliness of mind, mixed in the revels of a fashionable society. Gross injustice would it, therefore, be to try him by the standard of our own improved condition, and not associate him with the times as they were.

With a genius of that expansive nature—bright, prompt, and impulsive—that whatever it grasped at it accomplished, whatever it touched it ornamented—indomitable in pursuit, with its own lone star of fortune for its guide—borrowing no aid from any other source than that which sprung from within itself—we can scarcely feel surprise, that in the higher objects it was his ambition to attain, he should lose sight of the intermediate means, by which his position might be maintained; and his integrity in the management of his domestic affairs, secured, as against reproach.

It is the failing of genius, and appears to be

by all example, inalienable in its very nature. He could sow, he could reap, but he could not garner. Reared to no professional pursuit—left at a very early age to his own mental resources by his misguided father—with the feelings of a gentleman, mixing with gentlemen of family and fortune in the city of Bath, the most fashionable seat of extravagance and dissipation!—with more than ordinary fascinations—he attracted to himself the lively and the gay, the man of leisure and the man of pleasure.

At the age of sixteen—in its immaturity, in its enthusiastic glow, its volatile exuberance and vivacity—it is the more remarkable that, with temptation before him, such was the purity of his mind, he could not be inducted to any one of those vices which dishonour the head and disfigure the heart. His were the social enjoyments of the table—the wine and the wit, too early indulged in, and in after life too freely pursued.

He knew little of money in his earlier days, and nothing of its value in the after periods of his life. Lavish in its expenditure, he could subject himself to no system of economy. Trained up to no order in the management of his private affairs, he incurred the censure of those who felt themselves aggrieved by his carelessness or indif-

ference; but he never denied his indebtedness or deferred their payment with the means in hand. In these matters those who have written of him have done injustice to his memory.

But no individual within the circle of the sea-girt isle, knew, or respected Sheridan more than his Royal Highness George Prince of Wales, who, admitting him to his confidence, received him as a genial spirit and a boon companion: the partner of his pleasures: of his hours of relaxation from the exciting scenes of his Court: and his adviser in all matters relating to his personal inheritance. What better proof can be adduced that the public conduct of Sheridan was governed by a lofty spirit of independence, than the fact that, notwithstanding the all-powerful influence which his commanding talents had secured for him in high quarters, he not only never claimed, but on the contrary refused, the patronage which would have been liberally awarded to him. His usual remark when talked to by his friends on this subject, being, "My private character is my own, my public character belongs to my constituents and my country."

That the Prince Regent was infinitely better acquainted with Sheridan than his biographers, the correspondence of his Royal Highness attests. In a letter to Colonel Berkeley (the Earl Fitz-

harding) his Royal Highness writes: "Have you read Moore's Life of our lamented friend? It is quite clear Moore had prepared, in the spirit of book-making, as undertakers do, of keeping a stock in hand ready for use—a book, intended to be a *post mortem* examination into the character of some deceased celebrity, leaving blanks to be filled up as occasion might require, *Sheridan's death has enabled him to fill up the blanks, and bring his labours to market.*" From which we learn that the Prince was of opinion that Mr. Moore had not fairly delineated the character and genius of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Nor was he alone in this opinion. Sheridan was not to be measured for a suit of buckram, for though not deficient in that easy dignity which so becomes the polished gentleman and courtier, he was never less at home than when encased in a Court dress. Moore, it is clear, knew little of Sheridan in his night-gown and slippers, or of his social qualities, but by report; and consequently was not in a position to form a just estimate of the character he had undertaken to delineate. Nor was he altogether free from that prejudice which had resulted from a charge of plagiarism, a charge which Moore had long writhed under, being unable satisfactorily to repel—that of appropriating to his own use, in several of his lyrical effusions, some

of the original and happiest thoughts of the author of the "Duenna." In his humorous moments Sheridan was wont to smile at the imputation, and to express himself happy to find that he and the young Anacreon could be found to have *thought alike on the same subject, and at the same time sympathetically adopting the same mode of expression!* Moore was sensitive. His friend and coadjutor (in the production of his Irish Melodies), Sir John Stevenson, rather troublesomely communicative, highly relished the delicately-conveyed sarcasm, and but rarely omitted referring to it in his familiar intercourse with the aspiring young poet; thus freshening and keeping alive that disturbed feeling which ultimately settled down into a distaste for every thing Sheridonian.

Watson, the Prince Regent's purse-bearer, having approached his Royal master when the latter was busily engaged in scanning the pages of Moore's Life of Sheridan, the Prince, rising from his seat, said, "Let your business wait a little until you have answered my question. Have you seen Moore lately, or does he keep himself hidden from public observation?"

"I have not seen Mr. Moore lately, your Royal Highness, but I understand he is staying at Lansdowne House," was Watson's reply. On which the Prince rejoined, "Look him out, sir,

if you have any charity for the man; bid him abscond if he would avoid the penalty of the law, and escape indictment under Lord Ellenborough's Act rendering cutting and maiming a capital felony." With a look of astonishment, Watson exclaimed, "Impossible, your Royal Highness!"

"Impossible, sir, why I have before me," retorted the Prince, "the most conclusive evidence of his having *barbarously attempted* the life of *Sheridan.*"

Though not endorsing these opinions to their full extent, we cannot but admit their influence, and hence the appearance of "Sheridan and his Times;" not produced in the prevailing fashion of book making, but for the *purpose of correcting misrepresentation and errors* in the delineation of the true character of one of the most distinguished men of his day, and by which the likeness is greatly injured. Knowing Sheridan in our boyhood, when we stood at his knee—in our manhood when seated with him at the festive board—in his night-gown and slippers—in his every-day costume—in his every-day nature—in that mental *deshabille* which easily and gracefully displayed its own powers, fluently and refined—we trust that those who may do us the honour of running their eye down the following pages will rise from their task fully satisfied that we have accomplished our object.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHERIDAN FAMILY—JUVENILE WITTICISMS.

As, according to Dr. Johnson, "Many things that are false are transmitted from book to book," and, actuated by the desire of correcting errors of omission as well as commission, we shall proceed to inquire into the family history of the Sheridans: in exhibition of the fact that genius has been their inheritance for several generations; and that if they cannot boast nobility of blood, they can lay higher claim to that true nobility of genius—of wit, and learning—which has descended to them like an heirloom from generation to generation, from father to son in constant entail.

The paternity of Richard Brinsley Sheridan ranks high in the class of men distinguished for their learning, and who have devoted themselves to the dissemination of classical knowledge, both by instruction, and the publication of works of superior merit. It is true they were unendowed with titles or broad acres, but they were richly endowed with those mental accomplishments, which qualified them to rank with the most accom-

plished Scholars and Divines, and of higher blood than many who have been raised to the dignity of the peerage.

We shall not trace that ancestral line further than the grandfather of Richard Brinsley, associate of Dean Swift and the Earl of Cork and Orrery.

Dr. Thomas Sheridan, a Doctor of Divinity, was born in the county of Cavan, in the kingdom of Ireland, in the year 1684. Being educated for the Church, he, on being admitted into holy orders, established himself in a classical school in Dublin, about the year 1715, as a preparatory institute to the colleges, which, from the deep attention paid to the morals of his scholars, and their proficiency in Greek, Latin, and General Literature, obtained for it the highest celebrity, and an income exceeding in amount one thousand pounds per annum —a scholastic revenue unparalleled in those days.

The doctor had a keen wit, a sarcastic vein of humour, often injudiciously exercised. He was a sound preacher of the gospel, a good theologian, and a most profound classic.

Being one of the chaplains of the Lord Lieutenant, he, through the interest of his eccentric friend Dean Swift, obtained a living in the south of Ireland, producing a moderate income, but

valuable as a stepping-stone to the highest Church preferment. Unluckily, however, for the worthy doctor, the House of Brunswick, which had recently ascended the throne of England in the person of George the First, was not very popular, more particularly in that part of Ireland committed to the pastoral charge of our reverend doctor.

Ascending the pulpit of the Episcopal church, Cork, on the first day of August, kept as the King's birthday, with all eyes and ears directed towards him, impatient for his discourse; Dr. Sheridan, after a very solemn preparation, and when he had drawn to himself the mute attention of his congregation, slowly and emphatically delivered his text, "*Enough for the day is the evil thereof.*" The congregation, being divided in political opinions, gave to the text a decided political construction, and consequently, on the reverend preacher again reading the text with more marked emphasis, became excited, and listened to the sermon—which, although learned and eloquent, was of the same dubious character—with considerable restlessness and anxiety to the conclusion.

This was a most unhappy stroke of political wit, if it was so intended, and distressingly so in its consequences to the worthy divine, for it lost him his church patronage. He was struck out

of the list of chaplains to the Lord Lieutenant, and was even forbidden his visitations to the castle. He was not, however, very deeply affected by this sudden change in his fortunes, but returned to Dublin with a light heart and a buoyant spirit, in keeping with the general tenor of his previous life.

If we are to accept the character of this eccentric divine from the pen of his friend Lord Cork, we may probably discover some tracings of the inheritance which descended to his grandson, Richard Brinsley.

Lord Cork writes:—

"Dr. Sheridan was a schoolmaster, and in many instances perfectly adapted to that station. He was deeply versed in the Greek and the Roman languages, and in their customs and antiquities. He had that kind of good nature which absence of mind, indolence of body, and carelessness of fortune produce; and although not over strict in his own conduct, yet he took care of the morality of his scholars, whom he sent to the university remarkably well grounded in all kinds of learning, and not ill instructed in the social duties of life.

"He was slovenly, indigent, and cheerful. He knew books much better than men, and he knew the value of money least of all. In this situation, and with this disposition, Swift fastened upon

him as a prey with which he intended to regale himself whenever his appetite should prompt him."

His lordship then proceeds to treat on the unlucky sermon, and adds—

"This ill-starred, good-natured, improvident man returned to Dublin unhinged from all favour at Court, and even banished from the castle. But still he remained a punster, a quibbler, a fiddler, and a wit. Not a day passed without a rebus, an anagram, or a madrigal. His pen and his fiddle were continually in motion, and yet to little or no purpose."

Lord Cork was of opinion that the pen of Dr. Sheridan was discernable in several of the publications of Swift—that Swift made use of him for his own purposes.

The character we have quoted from the works of Lord Cork and Orrery was afterwards materially confirmed by the son of the doctor, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, in the publication of his Life and Correspondence of Dean Swift.

Doctor Sheridan died on the 10th day of September, 1738.

Thomas Sheridan, the father of Richard Brinsley, was born at Quilca, Ireland, in the year 1721. Dean Swift was his baptismal sponsor. On the death of his father, in the 17th year

of his own age, his prospects somewhat marred by that event and the improvidence which had left him but little else than a reliance on his own efforts for subsistence, he contemplated and was advised to undertake the education of youth, for which he was fully qualified; but entertaining the highest opinion of oratory, as an art which he considered lost by disuse, and which in his boyish enthusiasm he was determined to revive, he resolved upon the stage as the school of his practice, and the more available means of diffusing a thorough and classical knowledge of that admirable art which he loudly and widely proclaimed an art Divine. With this strange notion as to the means and the end, he studied for the stage, and made his first appearance before an audience at the theatre royal, Smock Alley, Dublin, in the character of Richard the Third.

We shall not follow him through his theatrical career, but content ourselves with simply remarking that he marred all his hopes and prospects by taking to a profession, not in those days of intolerance, of very high repute; and resorted to under the ill-judged plea of carrying out a plan for the establishment of a School of Oratory. The scheme was wild and visionary, still as an actor Mr. Sheridan obtained a reputation subordinate only to that of David Garrick himself,

with whom he maintained a respectable rivalry; but it disturbed his imagination, it diverted him from those classical pursuits for which he was better qualified, threw his mind out of a regular train of thinking, and with the distresses which his repeated quarrels and failures produced, ultimately left him as a last resource to resort to the quackery of itinerant lectures, which were also abandoned when their novelty had ceased.

Mr. Thomas Sheridan was, however, a man of considerable genius, and a thorough scholar, misguided only in his appliance of the means of establishing a school of oratory; which he assumed to be the master-art, to which every other art of man was subordinate. This chimerical proceeding not only disturbed his happiness, but obscured the great and commanding talents he possessed. His name, however, will be handed down to a distant posterity by his Life and Writings of Dean Swift, and by his Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language, still quoted as good authority. He is also the author of a variety of minor works on educational subjects, which have had their day. He died at Margate, August 14th, 1788, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, living to see his younger son, Richard Brinsley, in the flower of his fame, the great master of that

art which he so highly prized, and which he himself had so ineffectually struggled to establish by rule, and guide and govern by laws incompatible with nature in her inartificial development.

Mr. Sheridan's biographer has said of him, with much truth, "That his talents were more solid than brilliant, and his genius was inferior to his industry."

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was the third son of the gentleman whose history we have briefly sketched. His mother, Mrs. Frances Sheridan, was a woman of rare excellence, equally celebrated for her domestic virtues and her literary attainments. She was the author of "Sidney Biddulph," a novel combining the purest morality with the most powerful interest; rivalling the most admired productions of our classic novelists, the Richardsons, the Fieldings, and Smolletts of the day. Her portraits, true to nature, are drawn with a life-like spirit; with a charm about them fascinating and alluring, instructive and amusing. Her next work was "Nourjahad," an Oriental tale, in which brilliance of thought and richness of imagination attest the superior vigour of a mind classically and morally endowed. She also produced the comedies of "The Discovery," "The Dupe," and "The Trip to Bath." This highly-gifted lady died on the 17th day of

September, 1766, at Blois, in France; and such was the respect paid to her memory by the Roman Catholic diocesan, the Bishop of Blois, her interment was permitted in consecrated ground, an indulgence in France never before extended to the reputed heretic. Dr. Young, in his inestimable "Night Thoughts," bitterly complains of the different treatment of his own daughters buried in the same country: the allowance therefore of the Bishop of Blois stands out in evidence of the superior merit of this most exemplary woman.

Richard Brinsley was born in Dorset-street, Dublin, in the month of September, 1751, and baptised on the fourth day of the following month in the parish church of St. Mary's, Dublin, as appears by the register; and, consequently, had nearly attained his fifteenth year at his mother's death.

Thomas, his elder brother, died in childhood. Richard was placed, in the seventh year of his age, together with his brother, Charles Francis, who was by one year his senior, under the tuition of Mr. Samuel Whyte, of Dublin, the early friend of their father, and who was highly esteemed for his erudition, and the care and attention displayed in the instruction of youth.

Of the genius and aptness of the two pupils for

study we might probably be unable to give a better authority than that of a discerning mother, but that, in the instinctive fondness of the parent for her children, she is not always the best qualified to undertake their education at that early age, when they are twining round the heart, disarming authority; and by the same parity of reasoning, not competent to form a correct opinion of their youthful capacity. She had superintended their early studies with maternal solicitude, and was not imbued with much faith in their diligence, their inclination, or even in their capabilities of acquirement. "Had she omitted our capability," said Sheridan, at a time when the subject was committed to discussion, "I really believe I should have concurred with her in opinion."

In addressing herself to Mr. Whyte, who was now to become their preceptor, she very forcibly added:—"Patience, Mr. Whyte, in the very arduous profession you follow, is a positive necessity; and should you be deficient in that study, my boys will become practically your teachers. I have hitherto been their only instructor, and they have sufficiently exercised mine, for two such impenetrable dunces I never met with."

As already remarked, it is very questionable whether this truly excellent mother was, in the

tenderness of her feelings, qualified to undertake the early stages of her boys' education. Study is always hard to the young and volatile; hence it is not to be inferred that the difficulties of acquirement resulted from incapacity, but rather from the difficulty of bringing the young mind under a proper system of restraint.

Sheridan, in the steady warmth of attachment for his mother's memory, would sometimes recur to those early days, and treat us with reminiscences of his school-day follies. He was more enamoured of versifying than conjugating, and scribbling in his copy-book, as the whim of the moment took him. He would occasionally indulge in these reminiscences with great good humour; and his son Thomas, who was a few years my senior, would awaken them at those times when he had him to himself. It was a delightful evening that which was spent with this fascinating man, when (which, by the way, was seldom) he could be found at home, with closed doors against visitors, relaxing from the fatiguing labours of attending fashionable, or mixing in political, associations.

That Sheridan gave early indications of the vein of wit which distinguished him in after life, is evidenced in one or two impromptus which he essayed at the school of Mr. Whyte, and which

it appears that gentleman took in great dudgeon. They were scribbled in the luckless copy-book. The first which Mr. Sheridan retained in memory runs thus:

That Charley and Dickey are two dull boys
Mamma hath affirmed, so Sam Whyte employs
By ferrule and birch to sharpen their wit,
As wild colts are trained by bridle and bit.

When Whyte looks black, then Dickey looks blue,
I wonder who wouldn't—you'd do so too.

Sam Whyte's a wit, but I'll bet that he'll fail
Exploring a road to the head from the tail.

These were the facetiæs in which he sometimes indulged, to our infinite amusement and gratification, interspersed with some spicy anecdotes of boyish rogueishness, for which he drew on memory, and narrated as no man could narrate them but himself. The resources of his mind were exhaustless, its treasures rich and varied; he could adapt himself with equal facility to the entertainment of youth as to that wider sphere of social intercourse in which he stood so pre-eminent among the distinguished of the day.

The following letter of Dr. Samuel Parr—on which Moore, by some strange and unaccountable misconception, has founded his opinions of Sheridan's trickery and talent, in abusing the ear of his instructor, &c.—for we can apply to it no

milder terms of expression—is the best answer that can be given to the absurd notions of the distinguished but prejudiced biographer.

Dr. Parr writes from Hatton on the 3rd of August, 1818; and the letter was addressed to Thomas Moore:—

"With the aid of a scribe I sit down to fulfil my promise about Mr. Sheridan. There was little in his boyhood worth communication. He was inferior to many of his schoolfellows in the *ordinary* business of the school, and I do not remember any instance in which he distinguished himself by Latin or Greek composition, in prose or verse. Nathaniel Halhed, one of his schoolfellows, wrote well in Latin and Greek; Richard Archdale, another schoofellow, excelled in English verse; Richard Sheridan aspired to no rivalry with either of them.

"He was at the uppermost part of the fifth form, but he never reached the sixth; and if I mistake not, he had no opportunity of attending the most difficult and the most honourable of school business, when the Greek plays were taught, and it was the custom at Harrow to teach them at least every year. He went through his lessons in Horace and Virgil very well, for the time. But in the absence of the upper master, Dr. Sumner, it once fell in my way to instruct the two upper

forms, and upon calling up Dick Sheridan, I found him not only slovenly in construing, but unusually defective in his Greek grammar. Knowing him to be a clever fellow, I did not fail to probe and teaze him.

"I stated his case with great good humour to the upper master, who was one of the best tempered men in the world, and it was agreed that Richard should be called oftener, and worked more severely. The varlet was not suffered to stand up in his place, but was summoned to take his station near the master's table, where the voice of no prompter could reach him, *and in this defenceless condition he was so harassed that at last he gathered up some grammatical rules, and prepared him for his lessons.* While this tormenting process was inflicting upon him, I now and then upbraided him. But you will take notice that he did not incur any corporeal punishment for his idleness, his industry was just sufficient to protect him from disgrace.

"All the while Sumner and I saw in him vestiges of a superior intellect. His eye, his countenance, his general manner were striking. His answers to any common question were *prompt and acute. We knew the esteem, and even the admiration, which, somehow or another, all his schoolfellows felt for him.* He was mischievous

enough, but his pranks were accompanied by a sort of vivacity and cheerfulness which delighted Sumner and myself.

"I had much talk with him about his apple loft, for the supply of which all the gardens in the neighbourhood were taxed, and some of the lower boys were employed to furnish it. I threatened, but without asperity, to trace the depredations, through his associates, up to their leader. He, with perfect good humour, set me at defiance, and I never could bring the charge home to him.

"All boys and all masters were pleased with him. I often praised him as a lad of great talents, often exhorted him to use them well, but my exhortations were fruitless. I take for granted that his taste was silently improved, and that he knew *well* the little that he did know. He was removed from school too soon by his father, who was the intimate friend of Sumner, and whom I often met at his house. Sumner had a fine voice, a fine ear, fine taste, and, therefore, pronunciation was frequently the favourite subject between him and Tom Sheridan. I was present at many of their discussions and disputes, and sometimes took a very active part in them, but Richard was not present.

"The Father was a wrong-headed, whimsical

man, and perhaps his scanty circumstances was one of the reasons which prevented him from sending Richard to the university. *He must have been aware, as Sumner and I were, that Richard's mind was not cast in any ordinary mould.*

"I ought to have told you that Richard, when a boy, was a great reader of English poetry; but his exercises afforded no proof of his efficiency; in short, he, as a boy, was quite careless about literary fame. I should suppose that his father, without any regular system, polished his taste and supplied his memory with anecdotes about our best writers in our Augustan age.

"The grandfather, you know, had lived familiarly with Swift. I have heard of him as an excellent scholar. His boys in Ireland once performed a Greek play; and when Sir William Jones and I were talking over this event, I determined to make an experiment in England.

"I saw much of Sheridan's father after the death of Sumner. I respected him; he really liked me, and did me some important services, but I never met him and Richard together. I often enquired about Richard, and from the father's answers, found they were not on good terms; but neither he nor I ever spoke of his son's talents but in terms of the highest praise."

In another communication Dr. Parr says—

"I referred you to a passage in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, where I am represented as discovering and encouraging in Richard Sheridan those intellectual powers which had not been discovered and encouraged by Sumner; but the statement is incorrect. We both of us discovered talents which neither of us could bring into action while Sheridan was a school boy. He gave us few opportunities of praise in the course of his school business, and yet he was well aware that we thought well of him, and anxiously wished that more should be done by him than he was disposed to do."

I know not whether Tom Sheridan found Richard tractable in the art of speaking, and upon such a subject indolence or indifference would have been resented by the father as crimes inexpiable.

"In the later periods of his life Richard did not cast behind him classical learning. He spoke copiously and powerfully about Cicero. He had read and he had understood the four orations of Demosthenes, as read and taught in our public schools. He was at home in Virgil and in Horace; I cannot speak positively about Homer, but I am very sure that he read the Iliad now and then, *not* as a professed scholar would do

critically, but with all the strong sympathies of a poet reading a poet. Richard did not, and could not, forget what he once knew, but his path to knowledge was his own. His steps were noiseless—his progress w as scarcely felt by himself—his movements were rapid, but irregular.

"Let me assure you that Richard, when a boy, was by no means vicious. The sources of his infirmities were a scanty and precarious allowance from his father; the want of a regular plan for some profession, and, above all, the act of throwing him upon the town, when he ought to have been pursuing his studies at the University.

He would have done little among mathematicians at Cambridge; he would have been a rake, an idler, or a trifler at Dublin; but I am inclined to think that at Oxford he would have been an excellent scholar."

These were the opinions formed by Dr. Samuel Parr of young Sheridan, who was committed to his charge, and that of Dr. Sumner, as head masters of Harrow School. Sheridan was sent to Harrow in the year 1762, then in the eleventh year of his age; and we have yet to learn that that is an age to be considered as adult in our colleges of learning. We have not been claiming precocity, but we have been claiming that natural and progressive development of mind

which Dr. Parr recognises of a superior order, only obscured in its lustre by that indolence which characterises youth in its playfulness and elasticity.

Mr. Moore assumes—and his assumption has been partially adopted by those writers who have followed in his train of book-making—that he (Sheridan) "had persuaded Parr, at that time one of the ushers, that *he knew a great deal.*" That he could have persuaded Parr that he knew a great deal, is a most ridiculous assertion, and preposterous assumption. Parr—Dr. Parr, the stern, inflexible, uncompromising scholiast—the living, walking compendium of classic lore!—the animated encyclopediæ of the Greek and the Roman poets and philosophers, whose works had endured for ages, and breathed again a new life, freshened into existence by the industrial pursuits of this indomitable man.

We knew the venerable doctor, and never knew a man so little liable to the effects of imposition, or, to use Mr. Moore's benignant expression, persuasion in any classical matter; or one so crabbed and repulsive when in argument with the would-be, or rather pseudo classic; detection was certain, and contempt in no measured terms was sure to follow.

Sheridan was not a book-worm, dull, dry, and

pedantic, but he was a scholar; still rather delighting in the rich tints and shades of colouring characterising the Satires of a Horace or a Juvenal, than the more laboured black-letter productions of the Greek and Roman masters of the great schools of philosophy, whose principal merits lay in their antiquity. Both Parr and Sumner, at that time the head master of Harrow, discovered talents in the boy of a very decided and original character, impeded only in their development by a great amount of indolence, but remarkable for their vivacity and spontaneity.

It was unfortunate, in his case, that his father's circumstances, from a variety of causes, were so fluctuating and uncertain that he could not afford the expense of sending him to college; so that, when leaving Harrow, several years of that valuable portion of his life were trifled away in sheer idleness, if we except a few efforts at composition, both in prose and verse, of which a very few specimens of his young and rising genius have been preserved. This is not to be wondered at by those who knew anything of his peculiarities, since he set no great value on anything he ever did until it had received the stamp of value from the public.

Sheridan in his youth, as drawn by Dr. Parr,

may be truly received and acknowledged as a faithful portrait of the man in his whole after life. Talent of the highest order, obscured by indolence, never summoned into action but by the keenness of necessity, never kindled into a glow but by excitement. Dr. Parr's communication is completely in answer to all the variety of opinions which have been floated abroad either by ignorance or prejudice, and in complete refutation of Mr. Moore's opinion of everything proceeding from the pen of Sheridan being deeply studied and laboriously produced. Not that the fact itself could discredit the author, but that it implied an artifice conveying an impression that they were not the inspirations of a lively genius, spontaneously flowing from a mind exuberant in the richness of its vivid and natural endowments, but that they were in fact the products of deep study and incessant labour.

It is very questionable, even if Thomas Sheridan, the father of the two boys Charles and Richard, had possessed the means of affording to the latter a Collegiate education, whether he would have done so; such was his illiberal if not absurd prejudices against those distinguished seats of learning, and his disinclination of training up his children for any other purposes than his own. He had taken to himself Charles, who

was his favourite, and who enjoyed his confidence to the fullest extent, and employed him in public recitations, also as an assistant in the private instruction of those who were desirous of acquiring correct and elegant pronunciation. When Richard was taken from Harrow he also received lessons in elocution with the same view, but it does not appear that he fully answered the expectations of that infatuated man who, blinded to his own interests and the dearest interests of his children, rendered them the sacrifice to a wild and impracticable scheme.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHERIDANS AT BATH—THE LINLEY FAMILY—MISS ELIZABETH LINLEY—FIRST LOVE—MATHEWS—HER FLIGHT TO FRANCE—HER RETURN—HER EXPLANATION OF HER CONDUCT IN A LETTER TO HER FRIEND.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan had scarcely attained his seventeenth year, when his father established himself with his family at Bath, and it was here he first met, and as immediately became enamoured of the reigning beauty of the day, surrounded by troops of lovers of every rank and grade in polite and fashionable society, Elizabeth Linley—the universally admired, extolled, and beloved *maid of Bath.*

Miss Elizabeth Linley, unrivalled in personal charms and vocal accomplishments, with a reputation which the foulest breath of slander could not taint, was a native of that city, and the queen bird in that *nest of nightingales* which Dr. Burney, in his "History of Music," designates the Linley family. She was the attractive star that won all hearts to bow at her shrine.

As a vocalist she was the magnet of all public

concerts. She stood unrivalled in the loveliness of her person, the gentle and amiable expression of her countenance beaming with intelligence and the most delicate sensibility, the rich and mellow sweetness of her highly-cultivated voice, her commanding powers in the serious and sublime of the immortal Handel, and her thorough acquaintance with the divine art in which she had been educated, and which she pursued with surprising energy; though great was her repugnance to appear in such public exhibitions, exposing her to the gaze of the fopling and the fashionable licentious, with whom female virtue in such a position was estimated at a standard of price estimated upon an ascending scale proportioned to the elevated professional rank of the lady to be bid for.

As a lover of the science, she had an unconquerable aversion to the profession. She loved the science for itself, and was very little moved by the praise and admiration she excited. Tinctured with a little of romance in her elevated state of mind, and disdaining the homage of the multitude, which she endured with complacency and professional smiles, she had no heart to render, but to a romantic spirit equal to her own. She was little affected by lovers crowding around her—by offers of rank, fortune, and splendid equipage. Lovers, anxious to catch an approving

mile, then basking in that smile, which they received as some reward for their devotion—and as a something not a little encouraging to future hope.

That Richard Brinsley should be enamoured of such a paragon is not at all to be wondered at; but that his temerity should embolden him to enter the lists to tournay for the fair hand which he had, in common with all, pressed within his own, was, as he often expressed himself when in familiar conversation on such subjects, "a daring adventure."

Silence in wooing is a road to love not often trodden, but as Dr. Parr has written of him —silent, noiseless in his pursuit of learning—so noiseless and silent, without one breathing of his passion, did he approach the object of his deepest affections. Nor did he ever whisper out the secret, of his heart, until he had won her esteem, her confidence, and become the depository of her secret thoughts and aspirations. So noiseless, still to pursue the term, were his approaches, they were unobserved of all, even by the nearest and dearest of his relations and friends, some of them also candidates for the lady's favour—as in the case of his elder brother Charles, and his intimate and valued friend Halhed.

It appears remarkable that no suspicion should ever have been excited of the object of his steady

attentions to the lady, and the sympathy he had enlisted; but, as Sheridan has remarked of himself, "Poor Richard was too obscure, too pennyless, to aspire, and doubts were never raised."

There is something highly romantic in this love affair, which had been so secretly managed and so adroitly sustained that not the most distant suspicion of its existence obtained. It was generally known that he was the friend of Miss Linley—that they were much in communication with each other, and that he was in most things her material adviser. Still, if the thought arose, it was immediately dismissed that he could be received by the lady in any other light than the esteemed friend, ready and obedient at her bidding. And opinion was fully justified by the quiet coolness of the young parties themselves in their mode of addressing each other, and their passive looks and actions.

It must be remarked, by the way, that Miss Linley stood charged by the gossips of the pump room with sundry little flirtations, somewhat inconsistent with female propriety; and some disagreeable reports, surmises, and insinuations becoming current, Richard rendered himself her champion; and as other parties were named as being the favoured, his interference was accepted in vindication of her assailed honour merely as

the evidence of a disinterested friendship for the lady-love of his brother Charles. No doubt these thoughts had material influence over suspicion and of disarming inquiry. Be that as it may, the progress of the affection of the young couple advanced silently and securely. While it is due, in justice and to the lady, to repel the slanders of the prude spinsters of fifty, or the younger speculators in the lotteries of Cupid and Hymen, eagerly waiting to receive proposals for an honourable maternity—or the fashionable *roué* of the pump-room, who, to advance his own claims to an infamous notoriety, rests the polluted fabric of his fame on the slanderous assaults committed on female reputation.

The tabbys of the pump-room, always celebrated for small-talk, their lively chit-chat, their table gossip—in which character is discussed with dignified ease and equivocal slander—did not spare Elizabeth Linley in their lectures, always prefixed with a "Well, they do say," or "Well, would you believe it?" or the more complacent "Well, I must confess I have had my suspicions for some time, although I have said nothing," &c. As a public singer Miss Linley could not but be liable, and hardly be expected to escape these multiplied whisperings and insidious sneerings of malice, and the dark inuendo of the disappointed *roué*. Unhappily it is the fate of the

female professional to live and be victimized by envy and detraction; but in the constancy of her virtue the number of her admirers rather increased than diminished, and the offers of marriage in the same ratio.

Among the number offering marriage, and the most acceptable to her parents, was Mr. Walter Long, a gentleman of large fortune, whose estate upon his demise descended to the celebrated heiress of Wanstead, Mrs. Wellesley Pole Long. Mr. Long was a bachelor, considerably advanced in life, but his wealth counterbalanced the discrepancy of years in the opinion of Linley, who had stipulated that his daughter being his apprentice, the aged lover should contract to pay him one thousand dollars for the loss of her professional services, which was readily assented to. In the whole of this matter with regard to Mr. Long we lose sight of Sheridan altogether, or if we see him occasionally it is in the background, taking no apparent interest in, nay, wholly indifferent on, the matter; and we have no means of diving into the secrets of the grotto in the Sidney Gardens, where he was frequently to be found in the dusk of the evening, but not *alone*.

Miss Linley resisted the addresses of her aged inamorata for some time with repeated tears and earnest remonstrances, but, borne down by the

wearying arguments of her parents, with the constant shewing of the immense advantages resulting to the family from such an alliance, she was won over, but still with reluctance. Preparations were made for the marriage, and she was withdrawn from all public exhibitions. Nothing was talked of at Bath but the approaching nuptials, the amazing wealth of the bridegroom, and splendid dower of the young and beautiful bride. The dresses were made, the day for the celebration of the nuptials appointed, when lo! the pageant was swept away as with a breath; engagements were violated, and the word of promise broken. It was the triumph of envy, which had been gathering its spleen in the female circles, and soothed the chagrin and disappointment of her many lovers, whose hopes were instantly in a state of revival, ere the cause was sufficiently known which led to the *dénouement.*

Richard—the passive, submissive Richard—gave no sign by which to interpret his thoughts.

It is declared, upon the part of this admired lady, that although she had consented to the union, it was in utter violence to her own feelings, and that as the day approached she felt more keenly the wretched condition to which she was about to reduce herself. She felt she could not approach the altar and pledge her vows to a man,

whom she could not but respect for the delicacy of his attention, but whom she could never love as became a wife; and having no hope from an appeal to her own father, she determined to throw herself on her lover's generosity. It was the noble nature of that generous man to listen to her with the deepest interest and feeling, and, in the expression of his disappointment, to release her from her engagement, and to assign to himself the cause of their separation, thus taking upon himself the entire responsibility of that eclaircissement which was to eventuate in a suit at the instance of the avaricious Linley.

Slander was again busy with its distortion of facts; rumour on tiptoe, conflicting opinions, conflicting conjectures, were thrown into active circulation. The faithless lady on the one hand, the capricious lover on the other. Every one knew the marriage never would take place,—it was monstrous to believe the folly of such an event.

Sheridan alone—the imperturbable Sheridan, was mute on the subject; believing nothing, disbelieving nothing, but never hazarding opinion or conjecture.

Linley commenced his suit, which was untenable, but was conscled with the stipulated one thousand pounds for the loss of his daughter's

services during the time when she had been withdrawn from the public concerts, and there the matter ended; but at an after period Mr. Long, in admiration of the excellent qualities of his intended, her virtues, and her candour in revealing the state of her mind, voluntarily settled upon her the sum of three thousand pounds in token of his high estimation of her many amiable qualities.

This singular affair made a great noise in the fashionable world, and Foote, the dramatic satirist of the day, always ready to pounce upon any subject adapting itself to comic representation, readily availed himself of its material features, out of which he constructed an admirable farce, and called it "The Maid of Bath," that name by which Miss Linley was so generally known. Garrick wrote the prologue; the piece had an amazing run, the subject at that time constituting the general topic of private conversation.

Strange as it may appear, Charles Sheridan, the elder brother of Richard, who had upon a former occasion made a declaration of his love for the far-famed Maid of Bath prior to the affair of Mr. Long, now again renewed his addresses, in the conviction that Mr. Long's rejection was in his favour. Those addresses, however, were but coldly received. Charles, nothing

daunted, continued them, and in the blindness of his infatuation made Richard his confidant. It must be confessed this position of affairs did not argue much in favour of the young couple in point of candour, on the contrary, it leaves the taint of insincerity scarcely warrantable under any circumstances. But it may be pleaded that Richard was in no favour with his father; that his brother Charles was specially so, and that both his father and the Linleys were violently opposed to his brother's union; thus reducing his own hopes, so far as those parties were concerned, immeasurably below par. All fair in love is admitted a sovereign rule, secrecy therefore was their only assurance, and an unremitting watchfulness over their own conduct. A strict observance of distance, and a coldness of manner to each other, by a constrained formality before eyes too ready to peer into the secrets of lovers' hearts and gather proofs out of a smile gleaming on the cheek, or dancing in the beaming brightness of the eye, was, in their estimation, a duty they owed unto themselves.

But they had their places of private meeting which suspicion could not penetrate; and it will be seen how far the affections had advanced when, in the bosom of a grotto in Sidney gardens, secluded from the public gaze, over which the

mourning willow hung its drooping head—their favourite resort—our gentleman assumed to himself the censorship of the woman he so ardently loved, and, although in gentle terms, daringly reproved her for conduct which in his enamoured eyes awakened jealousy. The maid, unwilling to yield submission to a lover's censure, indignantly left him, in some degree amazed at his presumption, at his folly, and his weakness, and he was left alone to reflect at leisure and in grief on the pain which he felt he had inflicted.

This circumstance gave rise to the following beautiful lines, which came impromptu from the heart, and which he left on the seat of the grotto for her perusal:—

I.

Uncouth is this moss-cover'd grotto of stone,
And damp is the shade of this dew-dripping tree;
Yet I this rude grotto with rapture will own,
And, willow, thy damps are refreshing to me.

II.

For this is the grotto where Delia reclined,
As late I in secret her confidence sought;
And this is the tree kept her safe from the wind,
As blushing she heard the grave lesson I taught.

III.

Then tell me, thou grotto of moss-cover'd stone,
And tell me, thou willow with leaves dripping dew,
Did Delia seem vex'd when Horatio was gone,
And did she confess her resentment to you.

IV.

Methinks now each bough, as you're waving, it tries
To whisper a cause for the sorrow I feel;
To hint how she frown'd when I dared to advise,
And sigh'd when she saw that I did it with zeal.

V.

True, true, silly leaves, so she did, I allow,
She frown'd, but no rage in her looks did I see;
She frown'd, but reflection had clouded her brow,
She sigh'd, but perhaps 'twas in pity for me.

VI.

Then wave thy leaves brisker, thou willow of woe,
I tell thee no rage in her looks could I see;
I cannot—I will not, believe it was so,
She was not—she could not, be angry with me.

VII.

For well did she know that my heart meant no wrong,
It sunk at the thought but of giving her pain,
But trusted its task to a faultering tongue,
Which err'd from the feelings it could not explain.

VIII.

Yet oh! if indeed I've offended the maid,
If Delia my humble monition refuse,
Sweet willow, the next time she visits thy shade,
Fan gently her bosom, and plead its excuse.

IX.

And thou, stony grot, in thy arch may'st preserve,
Two lingering drops of the night-fallen dew,
And just let them fall at her feet and they'll serve
As tears of my sorrow entrusted to you.

X.

Or lest they unheeded should fall at her feet,
Let them fall on her bosom of snow, and I swear
The next time I visit thy moss-cover'd seat,
I'll pay thee each drop with a genuine tear.

XI.

So may'st thou, green willow, for ages thus toss
Thy branches so lank o'er the slow-winding stream,
And thou, stony grotto, retain all thy moss,
While yet there's a poet to make thee his theme.

XII.

Nay more, may my Delia still give you her charms,
Each evening, and sometimes the whole evening long,
Then, grotto, be proud to support her white arms,
Then, willow, wave all thy green tops to her song.

We say beautiful lines, for they were impromptu—the breathings of the poet gushing forth from a heart glowing with the warmest affections—pierced and wounded, labouring under the pang that he had deeply offended one in whom the whole of that heart centred. This is the standard of their merit as a composition.

Lovers' quarrels are like passing clouds, obscuring the sun for a moment, then revealing it in their flight in the fulness of its brilliance. Courtship is more frequently accelerated in its progress than retarded by those little flutterings of uneasy solicitude; they strengthen the affec-

tions by each reunion. The softness of his manners; the eloquence of his eyes, beaming tenderness; his surpassing wit, and the delicate, persuasive flattery of his muse, won for him the maiden's love — a love only equalled by his own.

Linley, as we have before stated, had most carefully educated his daughter for public life, fully assured that her commanding talents, united to her great personal attractions, must secure a fortune to himself; therefore did he guard her like forbidden fruit against all approaches unless accompanied by great wealth, and that patronage which his daughter's alliance might secure. He probably had all the feelings of the father; but they were merged in his ledger and daily cash book, and were not distinguishable by any prominence from his business routine. She was his goods, his chattel, his estate, from which he derived a large and increasing revenue; hence he was decidedly opposed to the advances of Mr. Charles Sheridan; but that Mr. Thomas Sheridan, the actor and elocutionist, the itinerant lecturer, should be opposed to such an alliance as derogatory to the dignified standing of his family, is strange enough, since the position of Miss Linley, as a leading vocalist at public concerts and oratorios, could not be less honourable or less

dignified than the position of his son Charles, who had been trained and exhibited in the public lecture-room as a precocious orator at the age of twelve.

In the midst of all these perplexities, Richard, altogether unsuspected of any design upon the Hesperian fruit, out-linxed the lynx in the quiet keenness of his pursuit; and, taking advantage of his father's absence, who had departed for Ireland on a professional engagement at the Crown-street Theatre, Dublin, persuaded the lady to elope with him to the Continent, where it is believed, they were married; but a question hanging doubt on the legality of that act, which was consecrated by a priest notorious as the Blacksmith of Gretna Green, he, in obedience to the dictates of the purest honour, placed his young and trusting mistress in a convent in which women were admitted without prejudice to sectarian principles and the doctrines of a religious creed non-conforming to an established faith.

This done, he immediately communicated his proceedings to her father at Bath. Her father as immediately hastened to reclaim his daughter. He found her in a very delicate state of health, resulting from fatigue and agitation of mind, produced more materially by reflection on the incau-

tious step she had taken, and apprehensions as to the consequences to her character.

Sheridan reunited with Linley, and they returned to England in company.

Miss Linley's extraordinary letter, which has fortunately been preserved, will best explain the events we have herein related, their causes and effects.

"BATH, *May* 2, 1772.

"After so long a silence, and after the many unfavourable reports which must, I dare say, have prejudiced my dear friend against me, how shall I endeavour to vindicate a conduct which has but too much deserved her censure? But if my dear friend will but suspend her judgment till I have made her acquainted with my real motives, I flatter myself she will rather be induced to pity than condemn me.

"At the time I wrote last, my mind was in a state of distraction not to be conceived; but I little thought then I should ever be brought to the cruel necessity of leaving my friends, and becoming an exile from everything I hold dear.

"In your answer to that letter, you hinted that you thought I loved Mr. R * * *, and that was the cause of my uneasiness; but in that you as well as many others have been deceived. I con-

fess myself greatly to blame in my behaviour to him; but I cannot explain myself on this subject without acquainting you with the first cause of every uneasiness and indiscretion I have since been guilty of. Let me then, my dear girl, beg your patience, for, though my story is long and not very enlivening, yet such is the affection I have for you, that I cannot bear to think it possible by the various reports which are so industriously propagated, I may entirely lose your good opinion and esteem, a thing of all others I should most regret. Excuse my being tedious; and when you know the motives which induced me to take this last step, I flatter myself you will once more restore me to your friendship.

"At the age of twelve years I was brought from the country where I had been all my life, and introduced into public with a heart capable of receiving the softest impressions, and too sincere ever to suspect deceit in another. I was led into scenes of dissipation, when reason and experience were not allowed to assist me in the many temptations which are ever surrounding a young girl in such a situation. But though my credulity often made me feel for the pretended distresses of others, yet my heart was entirely free from love, nor could I be seduced by flattery or compliments I always considered them as words

of course, and never looked upon those people as my friends who made too much use of them.

"In an evil hour my father was introduced to Mr. Mathews as a friend who wished to serve him. My father, who is like me, too apt to believe every one his friend who professes himself so, gladly embraced the opportunity of gaining the friendship of a man who had it in his power to be of service to him in his business. Little did he think he was seeking the serpent who was designed to sting his heart.

"Mr. Mathews, from the first moment he saw me, resolved to make me his prey, and child as I then was, left no means untried to make himself master of my affections, thinking but too justly that an impression fixed so early in life could not easily be removed. If it were possible to describe the many arts he made use of to effect this end, you would, I am sure, excuse me; but as these are not to be conceived by any one but those who are capable of acting so basely, I must still rely on your goodness.

"For three years he never ceased his assiduities to me, and though at times my conscience would upbraid me, yet by his respectful behaviour, his counterfeit distress, and by averring sentiments foreign to his heart, he made me instead of flying from him, not only pity him, but promise him my

friendship. This was my first fault; he saw too plainly that he was not indifferent to me, and made use of every artifice to increase my regard.

"About this time, the people began to take notice of his particular behaviour to me, and my friends all spoke to my father to hinder my seeing him: but my father, thinking that my youth was a sufficient safeguard for me, and unwilling to lose, as he thought, a good friend, took no notice of this first alarm. I then began to feel myself for the first time wretchedly involved in an unhappy passion for a man whom though I thought him equally to be pitied, yet it was criminal in me even to think of. When he went into the country for the summer, I resolved whatever it cost me to tear him from my heart, and when he returned, to avoid him everywhere. With these resolutions I consoled myself till winter. When he returned, he had not been in town a week before we had repeated invitations to his house. Conscious that I could never forget him if I was always to be exposed to his solicitations, I informed my mother of everything he had said to me, and at the same time told her how far he had gained my heart.

"Oh, my dear friend, had my mother but then acted properly, I had now been happy; but she, too much attached to interest, laughed at

my uneasiness, and told me that novels had turned my head; and that I fancied if any one was civil to me he must certainly be in love, She desired I would put such thoughts out of my head, for no man could think seriously of such a child. Thus was I again led into temptation, and exposed to all the artifices of a man whom I already loved but too well, and who was but too sensible of it. I could not fly from the danger. After my first reproof I was ashamed to mention it again to my mother, and I had everything to fear from my father's violent temper.

"For another year we went on in the same manner, till at last, finding it impossible to conquer my inclinations, he soon brought me to a confession of my weakness, which has been the cause of all my distress. That obstacle removed, many others fell, of course, and the next season he prevailed on me to meet him at the house of a friend, as we were not permitted to talk together in public. During this time I had many offers of marriage, very much to my advantage, but I refused them all. So far had he gained my love that I resolved never to marry.

"About this time Mr. Long addressed me. You know by what means I was induced to suffer his visits, though you do not know likewise that another great motive was the hope of forgetting

matters and retiring into solitude. After I had consented to receive Mr. Long's visits, I forbade Mathews ever to speak to me, to the consequences of which you yourself were witness. He immediately pretended to be dying, and by that artifice very nearly made me really so. You know how ill I was for a long time. At last he wrote me word that he must see me once more—that he would then take a final leave of me, and quit the kingdom directly, but he could not resolve to go without seeing me. I was weak enough to comply with his request, as I thought it would be the last time.

"Some way or other, my mother was told of it, when she taxed me with it. I immediately confessed everything that had passed since I first acquainted her with his behaviour. She was at first greatly enraged, but on my telling her how unexceptionally he had behaved, she was pacified, and consented to conceal it from my father. And indeed, my dear, had any impartial person been present at our meeting they would have thought Mathews the most unhappy but amiable man in the world. His behaviour was always consistent with the strictest honour. Nor did he ever, in the smallest degree, give me any reason to think he had any intentions that were in the least alarming to my virtue. Deceived by such con-

duct, his merit shone more conspicuous. Nor did I wish to get the better of my passion for one whom I thought every way so worthy of it. I considered myself as the cause of all his wretchedness, and thought it would be the height of cruelty if I did not endeavour to alleviate it.

"But to proceed. My mother resolved to see Mathews herself, and therefore insisted that I should write and desire to see him again that evening. I did so, and my mother went in my place. You may imagine he was very much surprised at seeing her. She went with a full resolution to upbraid him; yet so far did his arts prevail that he made her not only forgive but pity him, and promise that this should never make any alteration in our behaviour to him, and we would still continue our visits and intimacy with him. He promised, however, for the future never to attempt to see me.

"About this time my marriage with Mr. Long broke off, and my father went to London to commence a lawsuit. During the time he was absent, I went on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Norton, where you saw me. She had been informed, on undoubted authority, that my father would not only lose his suit, but that I should be exposed to the public court, as Mr. Long had been informed of my meeting Mathews, and intended to

make use of that as a plea in court. This being told me suddenly, and at a time when my spirits were greatly distressed, flung me into a high fever. I lost my senses sometime, and, when I recovered, was so weak, and had such strong symptoms of a rapid decline, that when my father returned I was sent to the Wells to drink the waters.

"While I was there, I was told that Mathews, during my illness, had spoken disrespectfully of me in public, and had boasted it was owing to my love for him I was so ill. This behaviour, from one for whom I had suffered so much, shocked me greatly, and I resolved, in my first heat of passion, that he should not have it in his power to triumph over my weakness. The resentment I felt was of service to me, as it roused me from a state of stupid despondence, which would, perhaps, have occasioned my death. It was then you received my first letter, which must have shown you in what a wretched state of mind I was.

"When I had so far recovered my spirits and health as to be able to walk and ride, I became acquainted with Mr. R——, who, from the first time he saw me, was particular in his behaviour to me. I did not at first observe it; and, as I thought him an agreeable man, and one who, I was told, bore an unexceptionable character, I

did not avoid him as much as I certainly ought. I wished, likewise, by turning my attention to him, to eradicate every impression of Mathews; but though Mr. R—— behaved with the greatest delicacy, I found it impossible to love him. I went on in this manner for some time, and by Mr. R——'s attention to me, incurred the ill-will of all the ladies, who did not spare to censure my conduct; but as I was conscious in my own heart of no ill, and wished to convince Mathews that he had not so much reason to boast of his conquest, I paid very little attention to the envy of the women.

"Mr. R—— had not as yet made any professions, but one day he confessed to me that he loved me, but that it was not in his power to marry publicly, as he was entirely dependent on his father, except a pension which he had; but at the same time begged me to consent to marry him privately, and to go off with him to any part of the world till his father died, when he would marry me again in the face of the world. This proposal, had I loved him, I should certainly have rejected, but in the state of mind I then was I was very angry, and refused seeing him for a great while.

"At this time Mr. and Mrs. Norton came over to be with me, as they had heard of R——.

Through their means R—— entreated me to forgive him, and permit him to be on the footing of a friend; and assured me I never should have further cause to be offended with him. As Mr. Norton, under whose protection I then was, had no objection, and as I really had an esteem for Mr. R——, and thought him a good young man, I consented, and we continued to walk and ride together, but never without Mr. Norton.

"I was thus situated, when Mathews came to the Wells, on his road to Wales. He had been extremely ill at Bath, and when I saw him in the public walk at the Wells, I could scarce keep myself from fainting; there was such an alteration in his person, I could scarcely have believed it possible. He spoke to me once in the walk, and asked me if I resolved to be his death; declared his illness proceeded from the accounts he had heard of me and R——, and that he was now going into the country to die. You may be assured I was greatly affected with his words, but as I had suffered so much in my reputation by my being seen with him, I would not stay to explain myself, or upbraid him with his behaviour to me. I merely told him that the only way to convince me of his sincerity was to leave me, and never see me more. I left him, and immediately went home, where soon after a lady informed me he

had fainted in the Long Room, and that his friends had taken him to Wales given over by all.

"This news made me relapse, and had very nearly cost me my life, till I heard again that he was well and in good spirits, laughing at my distress, and exulting in the success of his scheme. This once more raised my resentment, and I was resolved to encourage Mr. R——; and though I could not consent to go off with him, I told him, with my father's consent, that when it was in his power, if he still retained his love for me, and I was free from any other engagement, I would marry him.

"When I returned to Bath he followed me; but as he was very much talked of, I would not suffer him to be so particular. When he was going to D——, he begged me to give him a letter to you, that he might by you sometimes hear from me, as I refused to correspond with him. As I wished to have my dear girl's opinion of him, I was not unwilling to trust him with a letter in which I mentioned something relative to my misfortunes, but luckily mentioned no names, nor could he, if he had read it, have understood whom or what it meant. He wrote to me that he was in D——, but never mentioned your name, which I was surprised at; and as I had not heard any-

thing from you, was a good deal hurt, thinking you would not keep your word with me.

"In answer to his letter, I desired to know if he had seen you, and begged to be informed of some other circumstances in his letter which made me uneasy. To this I received no answer; and the account you gave me afterwards, convinced me that he was like all other men, deceitful. I then gave him up entirely, and contented myself with thinking how unworthy all men were of a woman's affections.

"I was in this state of mind when Mathews returned, when, in spite of all I could do or say, I was obliged to visit them, and scarcely a day passed without my having some conversation with him. In these conversations he cleared himself of the imputations alleged against him, and set my conduct in such a point of view, that he made me appear the criminal and himself the injured person. This, and being constantly with him, joined to his engaging behaviour, soon regained him that love which had never been quite extinguished—that gained, I was soon prevailed on to see him; but this did not hinder him from behaving so particular in public, that at last everybody talked of it, and many people spoke to my father.

"I was one night going to bed, when I heard

my father and mother talking very loud, and my name and Mathews' were repeated very often; this induced me to listen, and I heard my mother tell my father that I was miserable, and that Mathews was equally wretched—that we had loved each other for some years, and that she was sure it would be my death. My father seemed sometimes to pity and sometimes to condemn me; but at last he resolved I should never see him again.

"In the morning, when I came down to breakfast, my spirits were very low, and I could not refrain from tears; this soon brought on an explanation with my father, to whom I confessed everything that had passed. His behaviour was tender to a degree, and by that method he gained more upon me than if he had treated me harshly. Anger I can withstand, but tenderness I never could.

"My father, after many arguments, wherein he convinced me of the folly, if not wickedness, of such a connection, made me promise never to see him more, and told me he would break off all intercourse with the family immediately. In the afternoon of this day, Mrs. Sheridan called by Mathews' desire to know the reason why they had not seen me that day.

"Old Mr. Sheridan, who is now in Dublin, is

my father's particular friend. When they came to settle in Bath the strictest intimacy commenced between our families. Miss Sheridan is the only person besides yourself that I could place any confidence in. She is one of the worthiest girls breathing, and we have always been united in the strictest friendship. The same connection subsists between our two younger sisters. There are two brothers who, on our first acquaintance, both professed to love me; but though I had the greatest esteem for them, I never gave either of them the least hope that I should ever look on them in any other light than as the brothers of my friend. I own I preferred the youngest, as he is far the most agreeable in person, understanding, and accomplishments. He is a very amiable young man, beloved by every one, and greatly respected by all the better sort of people of Bath. He became acquainted with Mathews, and was at first deceived in him; but he soon discovered the depravity of his heart under the specious appearance of virtue, which he at times assumed; and perceiving the attachment between us, he resolved to make use of a little art to endeavour, if he could, to save me from such a villain. For this purpose, he disguised his real sentiments, and became the most intimate friend of Mathews, who at last entrusted him with all his designs with

regard to me, and boasted to him how cleverly he had deceived me, for that I believed him to be an angel.

"Excuse my being thus tedious, but it was necessary to let you so far into my connection with the Sheridans before I could account for my behaviour latterly.

"When Mr. Sheridan came to me in the evening I only told him something had happened to make me uneasy, but bid him tell Mathews that I would write to him. I accordingly wrote, and told him every circumstance that had happened; showed him how impossible it was for us to continue any such connection, and begged—for still I thought him worthy—that he would write to tell me he was convinced by my arguments, and that we might part friends, though unhappy ones. He wrote to me, and comforted me greatly by assuring me of his approbation of my conduct, and that he was ready to acquiesce in anything that would make me happy, as he was unwilling to see my father.

"Mr. Sheridan was appointed to settle everything. He accordingly came to my father and told him what Mathews had said, and that he intended to write to my father, and bind himself in the most solemn manner never to see me again. My father was satisfied with this, and pitied

Mathews greatly. He kept his word, and my father was happy that he had settled everything so amicably.

" Mr. Sheridan was with me every day, and did everything in his power to make me happy. He said if Mathews ever broke his word with my father he never would be seen with him again; as he had engaged him in the affair, he was resolved to act the part of a man of honour. I applauded his sentiments, but said I thought it impossible that Mathews ever should. The next day convinced me how cruelly I had deceived myself.

" I received a letter from Mathews, wherein he told me he was going to London, but would return in less than two months, and if I did not consent to see him sometimes, he would shoot himself that instant. He said my answer would determine his fate.

" This letter flung me into fits, as I must either break my word to my father, or consent to the death of the man on whose life my own depended. At last I wrote and expostulated with him once more on the baseness of such a proceeding. This letter, instead of having the wished effect, produced another still more alarming. In this he flung off the tender behaviour for which I always loved him, and put on the language of a tyrant;

told me he would see me—no father on earth should hinder him, and if I would not consent he would take me off by force. I answered this with some warmth, as I began to see I was deceived in him. I then insisted he should never write to me again, but he contrived to make me read a letter directed in another hand, wherein he told me we had both been deceived, through some mistake; said he had something to communicate of the utmost consequence to my future happiness, and if I would indulge him with ten minutes' conversation, he never after would desire to see me again; but if I refused the last request I must expect the worst.

"Terrified as I was, with no friend to advise me, I at last consented, and appointed an hour; but the moment he saw me he locked the door, and drawing a pistol from his pocket, uttered the most horrid imprecations, and swore if I would not bind myself by the most solemn oaths to see him again on his return from London, he would shoot himself before my face. Think, my dear girl, on my cruel situation. What could I do? Half distracted, I told him I would do any thing rather than see him commit so rash an action. This was Saturday, and I promised him, if I was alive, to see him on Wednesday evening, during the concert. On this condition he let me go.

"I was to spend the day with Miss Sheridan, who was ill with the toothache. All the time I was with her I was resolving in my own mind what way I was to act. To break my word with my father was impossible. If I did not see Mathews I expected worse was to ensue. What resource was there left? At length—I tremble while I write—I came to the horrid resolution of destroying my own wretched being, as the only means to prevent my becoming still more guilty, and saving my parents from still more distress. With these horrid thoughts I searched Miss Sheridan's room for some laudanum, which I knew she had for the toothache. I found a small bottle full, and put it into my pocket.

"The next day, Sunday, after church, I left my mother and sisters walking. I sat down, made my will, and wrote a letter to my father and one to Mathews. While I was about it Mr. Sheridan came in; he had observed me taking the laudanum, and when he saw me writing he seemed very much alarmed. At last, after swearing him to secrecy, I told him what I intended to do, and begged him to take charge of my letters. He used every argument in the world to dissuade me from it, but finding them all useless, he entreated me at least not to take it till the afternoon, as he then would tell me something which he

was sure would make me lay aside such thoughts entirely. Fearful of his betraying me I consented, but the moment he was gone took half the quantity, and after dinner, finding it had no effect, took the rest. My fears were true; he had gone to Dr. Harrington and to Dr. W., and begged of them, for God's sake, to go to our house that night in case I should have taken it before he returned in the evening. When he came I was on the settee in a state of lethargy. He immediately ran for the doctors, but before they could give me any assistance I dropped down, as they thought, dead. I lay for some time in that dreadful state, till by force they opened my teeth and poured something down my throat, which made me bring up a great deal of the poison.

"To describe the distress of my family at this time is impossible, but such a scene, by all accounts, cannot be conceived or imagined. It was happy for me that I was insensible of it, as it would certainly have had a severer effect upon me than all the poison.

"After I had taken every thing that was proper, I was put to bed, where I passed the night in the most dreadful agonies of mind at the thoughts of what would be the consequence of this affair.

"Monday evening Sheridan came to me. He

expostulated with me with the greatest tenderness, and showed me the dreadful crime I had been about to commit, and for one who was every way unworthy of my least consideration. He then told me every circumstance relative to myself which Mathews had told him. He showed me letters he had received from him, and wherein his villany was fully explained.

"Judge what must be my feelings on finding the man for whom I had sacrificed life, fortune, reputation, everything that was dear, the most abandoned wretch that had ever existed. In his last letter to Sheridan he had told him that I had given him so much trouble that he had the greatest inclination to give me up, but his vanity would not let him do that without gaining his point. He therefore said he was resolved, the next time I met him, to throw off the mask; and, if I would not consent to make myself still more infamous, to force me, and then leave me to repent at leisure. He then told how he had acted on Saturday, and that I had promised to see him on Wednesday He then said he would sufficiently revenge himself for all the trouble I had given him; but if I changed my mind, and would not see him, he was resolved to carry me off by force. The moment I read this horrid letter I fainted, and it was some time before I

could recover my senses sufficiently to thank Mr. Sheridan for his opening my eyes. He said he had made Mathews believe that he was equally infamous that he might sooner know his designs, but he said it was not in his power to appear on a friendly footing any longer with such a villain.

"Mr. Sheridan then asked me what I designed to do. I told him my mind was in such a state of distraction between anger, remorse, and fear, that I did not know what I should do; but as Mathews had declared he would ruin my reputation, I was resolved never to stay in Bath.

"He then first proposed my going to France and entering a convent, where he said I should be safe from all kind of danger, and in time I might recover my peace and tranquillity of mind; his sister would give me letters of recommendation to St. Quentin, where she had been four years, and he would go with me to protect me, and after he had seen me settled, he would return to England, and place my conduct in such a light, that the world would applaud and not condemn me.

"You may be assured I gladly embraced this offer, as I had the highest opinion of him. He accordingly settled everything, so that we resolved to go on that fatal Wednesday, which was to de-

cide my fate. Miss Sheridan came to me, approved the scheme, and helped me in putting up my clothes. I kept up my spirits very well till the day came, and then I thought I should go distracted. To add to my affliction, my mother miscarried the day before, owing to the fright of Sunday. The being obliged to leave her in such a situation, with the thoughts of the distress in which my whole family would be involved, made me almost give up my resolution; but, on the other hand, so many circumstances concurred to make it absolutely necessary, that I was, in short, almost distracted.

"At last Sheridan came with two chairs, and having put me half fainting into one, and my trunks into another, I was carried to a coach that waited in Walcot-street. Sheridan had engaged the wife of one of his servants to go with me as a maid without my knowledge. You may imagine how pleased I was with his delicate behaviour.

"Before he could follow the chairs he met Mathews, who was going to our house, as I had not undeceived him for fear of the consequence. Sheridan framed some excuse; and after telling him that my mother had miscarried, and that the house was in such confusion it would be impossible for him to go in, begged he would go to

his sister's, and wait there till he sent for him as he had an affair of honour on his hands, and, perhaps, should want his assistance. By this means he got rid of him.

"We arrived in London about nine o'clock the next morning. From London we went to Dunkirk by sea, where we were recommended to an English family, who treated me very politely. I changed my name to Harley, as I thought my own rather too public. From thence we proceeded to Lisle, where by chance Sheridan met an old school-fellow, who immediately introduced us to an English family with whom he boarded. They were very amiable people, and recommended us to a convent, which we resolved to accept without going further.

"Adieu, my dear girl,

"And believe me yours,

"E. LINLEY."

Who can read this simple narrative without sympathising with the child whose sorrows and sufferings were entailed upon her by her dazzling beauty and accomplishments, exposed by her profession to the mixed gaze of a public audience! Who can doubt its truthfulness, with the whole after-life of the amiable woman before them, and accompanied as it is by the free confession of her

own weaknesses and romantic attachment for the insidious villain into whose association she was forced by her own parents? But we are not prepared to write a homily on the subject—to praise where we should condemn, or attempt the justification of what we cannot approve.

Those who know little of a professional life, of the dangers surrounding the young and beautiful vocalist, whose charms are the attraction not less than the skill and science she displays, may question like mothers, and doubt like prudes, then turn away with a shrug and a sigh—a shrug in censure, and a sigh in redeeming pity; but slander cannot cast a slur upon her tomb, or shadow her memory with one unwholesome thought or one unworthy act. She was a priceless gem in her purity, qualified both by nature and art to adorn and excel; but she was a public performer, not upon the stage of a theatre, it is true, but in a public concert-room, on exhibit to the libertine who could pay the price of admission to her presence, regulated by her manager.

Young, susceptible, delicate, and refined! she almost deplored the talent she possessed; but her talent was the property of her father, and its exercise, however painful to her feelings, was demanded of her [illegible] property in the pursuit of a profession he [illegible]opted as his means of living.

The trials and temptations of the female professions are almost beyond human strength; they become the marked prey of the wealthy profligate; let us then view with charity those that fall, and warmly eulogise that exalted virtue which, with woman's failings and woman's feelings, could pass through the ordeal of a public life unscathed. Miss Elizabeth Linley was no more than a child prematurely considered as a woman; in her girlhood highly endowed, uniting in herself fascinations of the highest order, dragged into public life at the early age of twelve years, as a money-making speculation, by her own father, and left in the government of her private conduct to her own guidance. Introduced by her father to Mathews, a man of considerable wealth and influence, whose patronage he sought, his child was left at this early age to receive her first impressions of gallantry from a man remarkable for the gracefulness of his person and insinuating manners. As a child, she listened to him with fond affection; while, like a serpent, he approached her, under a moral guise, as the protector of her youth and inexperience. For three years he pursues her with unwearied attentions, smothering the passion he had nourished, without ever breathing a word by which a suspicion of his designs could be excited, or dropping a thought which could

awaken her from her dreams of the sincerity of his fatherly and brotherly tenderness and affections. He was a husband, and the knowledge of that fact was all-sufficient, in her confiding nature, to assure her of a friendship as devoted as it was disinterested. Independent of those considerations, he was the friend of the family—the confidential adviser of her father, with whom he was in constant intercourse and interchange of visits.

Long and steadily-cultivated friendships between the sexes approximate so closely to love that they can hardly be distinguished in their growth, springing from the same root. It can hardly be wondered at that Mathews, in every respect attractive both in person and accomplishments, shielded too by the appropriation of the Linleys, who were all unconscious of his designs, should so easily glide into that heart which he was moulding to his purpose—covertly moulding under the sacred garb of husband, as the secure covering of his unprincipled approaches. No wonder, since he had rendered himself necessary to her in his confidential advisings, that he should win his way into that unsuspecting heart while he was diverting her mind from forming any other attachment. His advances were slow but seemingly secure; he had yet to learn the

purity of that mind, which, with all its girlish weaknesses, tinctured with romance, could neither yield or bend to its humiliation. He broke ground in the declaration of his abominable passion, and felt the reproof due to his baseness and his vanity. He apologized with abject humility, declared himself sensible of the madness of his infatuation, which it should be the business of his life to subdue, and humbly claiming her pity and forgiveness.

Having touched upon these points in explanation of the conduct of Miss Linley, we leave the rest to her admirable letter, distinguished, as it is, for its veracity and the candid admission of her own follies.

In this letter we have the whole secret of Sheridan's influence—the whole is unravelled. We cannot, however, approve of the line of conduct he adopted with reference to his intimacy with Mathews with a view to obtain possession of his secrets; conceiving that his chivalry would have been much better manifested by the open and candid exposure of the profligate, and the championship of insulted innocence, though by these means he might have lost the prize he had essayed to win.

We are brought to this conclusion, however, that to these circumstances, aided by a previous

knowledge of the intriguing allurements cast in the way of female professional life, he became the more confirmed in his resolution of withdrawing his wife from the circles of pollution, and taking upon himself and the efforts of his own genius, the sole and exclusive support and maintenance of his own household.

It was a noble resolution.

CHAPTER IV.

DUELS WITH MATHEWS—SHERIDAN WOUNDED—LINLEY CONDITIONALLY CONSENTS TO HIS DAUGHTER'S MARRIAGE—SHERIDAN ENTERS HIMSELF A MEMBER OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE—HIS MARRIAGE.

On their return to Bath, Miss Linley was interdicted from any further intercourse with her lover; and so carefully watched and guarded, that cunning itself could devise no means by which to defeat the guard, while Sheridan himself found a business already prepared to his hands demanding all his energies.

It had been reported, and generally believed, that Miss Linley, in order to avoid the persecutions of a man of the name of Mathews—a practised married libertine, possessing considerable estate, (whom Linley, the father, was timid in offending, and had consequently taken little account of his daughter's complaints)—together with her increasing dislike to her profession, which made her shrink more and more from the gaze of the many, as she became more devoted to the love of one who had induced her to the romantic resolution of a flight to France, and taking refuge in a convent, as the only reliable means of her ex-

trication from the troubles and dangers with which she was beset. How far the Bath gossips were right in their conclusions has been already shewn. The plot was in itself the work of a master mind, romantically conceived, ingeniously contrived, and most adroitly executed. Suspicion never glanced at Richard Sheridan; and when the whole story stood revealed by his letter from Calais, it was listened to with short breathings, wonder, and astonishment. So completely was suspicion disarmed, that not a thought glanced at the principal mover, the great actor in this novel and romantic drama.

It appeared also upon its unravelment that his sister, afterwards Mrs. Lefanu, had unconsciously assisted in his design, and to that assistance was he chiefly indebted for his success. Elopements may be well planned; but in these our modern days chivalry is at a discount, and the beauties of romantic adventure, overshadowed by turnpike roads and turnpike gates—hence, since the discovery of the regions of gold, purses have become necessary to the most common enterprise. Now Sheridan was not familiar with purses, but perfectly well knew their value, and that no undertaking could be safely hazarded without their encouraging aid. Under this necessity he applied to and prevailed upon his sister to furnish the

means of flight out of her own pocket, though not overburthened, under the plea that he had consented, on the earnest entreaty of Miss Linley, to conduct her to a convent in France, where she might securely dwell, freed from the painful position in which she found herself, and which would assuredly drive her to madness! He assured his sister that his conduct in the affair was purely and solely for the service of Miss Linley, who had reposed her confidence in him; and that he had no design or desire, of taking advantage of the step which she had determined on adopting.

His arguments, enforced with more than common eloquence, and in which he energetically displayed the young lady's virtuous sufferings, were convincing. His sister sighed and believed, commended and approved.

These romantic lovers, for such they were, in the bloom of their early youth—Sheridan with the down of manhood barely dawning on his cheek, and his fair companion with maiden modesty just ripening into womanhood—launched into life upon a perilous adventure, without rudder and without guide.

It had been the policy of Sheridan to keep up appearances, to associate with Mathews, who had insulted the virtue of Miss Linley by dishonourable proposals. We touch lightly upon this

equivocal conduct, neither condemning or approving what must surfacially appear to be very questionable, evidently for purposes which it would be difficult to arrive at, viewed in the abstract; but by rendering himself, to all appearance, the personal friend of Mathews, he placed himself in a situation by which he might possess himself of his secrets, and be enabled to defeat them; besides which, it facilitated his own views in other ways. The end cannot be allowed to justify the means, but this is a question reserved for solution by those who hold the maxim good that "all is fair in love."

When the elopement was ascertained to have taken place, and the secret divulged, it was to be expected that the most angry passions would be excited among the parties who felt themselves betrayed, deceived, outwitted. Mathews, insanely, with a fiend-like spirit which knew no bounds to its malevolence, whose object was seduction: insensible to shame in the public announcement of his infamy, avowed, in the impotence of his rage, the unprincipled design which Sheridan had so happily frustrated.

His brother Charles, wholly ignorant of the attachment of the parties for each other, now for the first time revealed, expressed himself in strong terms of mortification and resentment, which

Mathews took advantage of, and basely used them, accompanied by reflections injurious to the reputation both of Richard and Miss Linley, which he conveyed in paragraphs published in the *Bath Herald.*

Sheridan, informed on his return to England of the unprincipled proceedings of this man, and of his dastardly impeachment of his honour, and more infamous repudiation of Miss Linley, felt himself bound to defend her character from blemish; and consequently, on his arrival at Bath, he sought the libeller, with a thorough determination of obtaining a retraction of the calumnies, or that satisfaction which the laws of honour have decided as the only alternative to which a gentleman can honourably appeal. But Mathews, on hearing of his arrival, had fled to London, to which place Sheridan pursued him, accompanied by his brother Charles, with whom a reconciliation had been effected. He found him in a tavern in Bedford-street, Covent Garden, and both parties, being resolutely bent on redress of imagined wrongs, drew their swords, the wearing of which was the fashion of the day.

Being complete masters of their weapons, they fought with great skill and resolution, each being highly incensed. Eventually, however, Mathews was disarmed by his adversary rushing in upon

him, and in the struggle was borne to the ground. In this prostrate situation the libeller sued for his life, which was granted on his signing a confession of his perfidy, of the gross falsehoods he had circulated, and retracting them *in toto.*

Unfortunately the matter was not to terminate here. Sheridan, on his return to Bath, as he was bound to do, in full satisfaction of his aggrieved honour, and in justice to the lady whose cause he had undertaken to defend, published the confessions of the delinquent in the public journals in which the offensive paragraphs had appeared.

Mathews's situation now became intolerably painful. The doubt, if any had existed, was removed as to his complicity in the slanderous imputations, by the antidote to the several poisons being found in the same handwriting. Maddened by the utter contempt with which he was received by the party, of which he considered himself the leader, he, covered with disgrace, on finding himself exiled from society, returned to his estates in the county of Glamorgan, where he found no better fate awaiting him among his neighbours—a high-toned, high-spirited gentry, who rejected him as unworthy of their association. Still further blinded by his rage—stung by the sarcasms of his former companions—he, in the highest state of

irritation at being thrown out of the circles of that society in which he had hitherto moved, hastily returned to Bath, and assuming a position not tenable under the peculiar circumstances of his case, with a view to retrieve himself from the disgrace of his humbled condition, sent a message to Sheridan, demanding another meeting, which was promptly accepted, contrary to the advice and opinion of his friends.

It was contended, and with much reason, that Mathews, having been defeated at a fair and honourable meeting, and having obtained the grant of life on conditions which he had subscribed—conditions which had fixed upon him the enduring stain, the indelibly affixed mark of odium and disgrace—had forfeited all claims to the laws of honour; that, whatever he might suffer from the exposure of his guilt, avowed by his own confession, and bearing his own signature, he could establish no claim to further consideration in the quality of a gentleman, and it would ill become his former antagonist to elevate him from his singular degradation by acceptance of his challenge.

But, Sheridan, in the loftiness of his spirit, which the advice of his most sincere and judicious friends could not shake; and probably with another feeling more intimately akin to revenge for

the insults and injuries offered to a female to whom he was bound by no ordinary tie, rejected the plea as affecting his own character for consistency and courage; and it was accordingly settled that the meeting should take place at Kingsdown, near Bath, upon the terms and conditions imposed by that sanguinary code, established in a barbarous age, when trial by battle was to furnish the evidence of guilt.

The combatants appeared upon the ground at the appointed hour, attended by their seconds; and, upon the settlement of the preliminaries, each took his stand, and both in the highest state of excitement.

The combat appears to have been fierce and savage, ill-tempered and uncontrolled in its violence, by the incompetency of men acting as seconds, whose business it was to see that the laws of duelling were not violated.

After a discharge of pistols without effect, they drew their swords, and, rushing upon each other, fought with a frantic resolution, and, in proportion to their violence, with less of skill, parrying well the assault, but each in his turn losing advantage by the intemperance of his action. At length Sheridan, watching his opportunity, endeavoured to rush in upon his adversary, as upon a former occasion, endeavouring to

disarm him; but Mathews, aware of the movement, with great address disengaged his sword-arm, and he was foiled. They then closed; the life-struggle now became more desperate, and both displayed uncommon strength. In the vigorous exertion of muscular power, mental energy, passion, and skill, several severe wounds were indiscriminately inflicted, when they came to the ground, weakened by the loss of blood, and in their fall both swords were broken. Mathews having greatly the advantage, being uppermost, pressed heavily upon Sheridan; and, inflicting several wounds with his broken sword, exultingly demanded of him whether he would beg for his life? "Never," was the reply; "never," at the same time fainting from the loss of blood. The seconds now interfered, and he was conveyed in a chaise to Bath, Mathews and his friend proceeding immediately to London.

This was, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary duels that had ever been committed to record, and one which has found no parallel in after times, distinguished as it was for the intense animosity of the combatants and the incapacity of the seconds, who appear to have been better qualified to conduct the business of a Spanish bull-fight than to have regulated proceedings in the lists of mortal combat.

Sheridan's wounds were serious, he was confined to his bed for several weeks, during the principal part of which time he was kept quiet by direction of his physicians, and not allowed intercourse with visitants.

Miss Linley was deeply afflicted by the event, and her distress was painfully aggravated by the prohibition; constant in her inquiries, unremitting in her appeals, agitated by the hopes and fears which every whisper of the state of the patient excited, her health suffered. She intreated —she claimed the privilege of a wife, to the dismay of her parents; but the medical attendants, influenced as well by the weak condition of the invalid, as by the wishes of the Linleys, remained inexorable.

Sheridan's heroism could not fail to produce its effect in increasing the ardency of her attachment for the man, who had twice so resolutely offered his life to her service; at the same time the stern and uncompromising opposition of her family, produced a no less powerful influence in giving firmness and resolution to that mind which had, by other circumstances, been so powerfully predisposed.

The ground of opposition must be admitted prudentially of great weight. Sheridan was alike destitute of fortune, expectancy, or calling; with

no resource but what was to be derived from the exercise of his pen, in the production of minor essays for the public journals of the day—a very precarious means of subsistence, to say the least of it. His father's doubtful fortunes could justify no hope in that quarter, independent of the severe displeasure he had incurred by disturbing him in his favourite oratorical scheme, and withdrawing those aids which the infatuated man had so confidently relied upon. Sheridan, therefore, had no reliance but on his own powers, and they were not sufficiently estimated by the Linley family.

That a marriage under such circumstances could only be productive of want and misery to the parties contracting, was a natural conclusion, unless relieved by the popular and attractive talents of the wife, by their public exhibition, to which she had shown so much repugnance, and which Sheridan himself had declared should never be employed as the means of their joint support. With this emphatic declaration, and the very slender amount of faith reposed in the revealment of those powers with which nature had endowed him, and the graces of art had embellished; we must view with more than ordinary sympathy the position of the Linleys, and the paternal affections felt for a lovely and highly-gifted child.

The French marriage was a very doubtful matter, urged only for purposes which were not answered at the time, and never afterwards insisted upon.

Sheridan's ultimate recovery was announced in the Bath journals, and the quietude of all parties restored; but the most stringent measures were adopted to prevent the meeting of the lovers, and he was left to his own wit and stratagem to accomplish the interview even of a moment of the beloved one, imaged in his heart; but Sheridan was not deficient in stratagem, and in various disguises he accomplished his desires. Miss Linley was engaged at the Bath concerts, but was always attended by members of her family, and so carefully watched, that it would have appeared impossible any communication could have been made between them; but the strictest vigilance was outwitted by the lover who lived in his mistress' eyes. Habited as the driver of a hack carriage, which was on constant hire to drive her to and from the concerts by a contrivance with the keeper of the yard in which the coach was stabled, this romantic adventurer, who could not be restrained in his enthusiasm, or deem any peril too great to encounter in obtaining admission to his mistress, luxuriated in the thought that he had

been near her unknown, and that he had touched her hand as he handed her into the carriage. Romance, enchanting romance, thy votaries live in blissful dreams—courting shadows, and giving to nothingness the fruitful pencillings of imagination, rich in the tintings of inspired thought. Sheridan was a poet in practical expedients, and never deficient in expedients for the attainment of an end; it was some time ere he obtained the desired opportunity of revealing himself. At length the guardian of the treasure was asleep. She entered the carriage alone and unaccompanied. The coachman was ordered to drive home, and no observing eye was there to watch the development of the purest love, or listen to the language which poured forth in gushing streams, the silvery flow of mutual soul-absorbing passion. From this period, their interviews became frequent, and notes and epistles passed when recognition would have been fatal.

But "the course of true love never does run smooth," and it came to pass that some certain little scraps of love were found in my "lady's chamber," and the thing was discovered, but how or by what means these amatory scraps had fallen into the hands for which they were intended, was a mystery not to be solved. Inquiries were made,

examinations instituted, but no clue could be found to this inexplicable mystery. The coachman was beyond suspicion.

At length, the Linleys finding their case hopeless, relaxed in their vigilance, reiterating, as their only then objection, that Sheridan followed no profession. To conquer that objection, and to remove its weight by the assurance of his devoting himself to more legitimate and prospectively productive pursuits, he entered himself as a member of the Middle Temple, on the 6th day of April, 1772, and was admitted into Commons in the following Hilary Term. By this step all objections were overruled, and he was admitted to the family as the avowed and accepted lover of Miss Elizabeth Linley.

The Linleys finding all opposition in vain gave their reluctant consent to the marriage, which was consummated on the 13th of April, 1773; Richard Brinsley Sheridan being then in the twenty-second year of his age, and Miss Elizabeth Linley in her nineteenth.

With the following poetical correspondence of the married pair we close this chapter.

It was suggested by the young wife timidly venturing the suspicion that the want of stability upon the part of her enamoured husband might

mar their future happiness, on which he addressed to her the following lines :—

DAMON TO DELIA.

I.

Ask'st thou how long my love shall stay
When all that's new is past;
How long? Ah, Delia, can I say
How long my life will last.
Dry be that tear—be hush'd that sigh,
At least I'll love thee till I die.

II.

And does that thought afflict thee too,
The thought of Damon's death;
That he who only lives for you
Must yield his faithful breath.
Hush'd be that sigh—be dried that tear,
Nor let us lose our Heaven here.

To which she replies—

DELIA TO DAMON.

I.

Think'st thou, my Damon, I'd forego
This tender luxury of woe;
Which better than the tongue imparts
The feelings of impassion'd hearts.
Blest if my sighs and tears but prove
The winds and waves that waft to love.

II.

Can true affection cease to fear;
Poor is the joy, not worth a tear.
Did passion ever know content,
How weak the passion words can paint.
Then let my sighs and tears but prove
The winds and waves that waft to love.

III.

The Cyprian bird with plaintive moan
Thus makes her faithful passion known.
So Zephyrus breathes on Flora's bowers,
And charms with sighs the Queen of flowers;
Then let my sighs and tears but prove
The winds and waves that waft to love.

How sweetly eloquent, so full of love! are these plaintive lines of caressing tenderness; not to be judged by the cold temperament of the mere critic, whose leaden eye peers not beyond the thought expressed, to the deep feelings which gave to thought its birth. These are the lays of domestic minstrelsy, not wrought and fashioned out for worldly praise or worldly censure; and are only quoted here in evidence of that harmony of soul which united and distinguished them for the remainder of their lives.

CHAPTER V.

HE WILL NOT SUFFER MRS. SHERIDAN TO APPEAR IN PUBLIC.—HIS LETTER TO LINLEY.

THE boldness of adventure, the firmness of purpose, the ingenuity of his stratagems, by which Sheridan diverted attention from his design upon the affections of the woman he adored, speak loudly in support of that manly firmness of mind and purpose which developed itself in all his proceedings in the struggles of life.

The delicacy of his approaches, the slow and almost imperceptible means by which he inspired her confidence and wooed her affections, without even the most timid whisper of his own:—while she, surrounded by admirers who, presuming on rank and wealth as irresistible temptations, were ready to prostrate them at her feet—are strong circumstances, characterizing the indomitable man, who possessed in himself not one recommendation on which he could urge his suit, save, indeed, a graceful person and a fluent wit, manners easy, gentle, and unobtrusive. Modesty was the

charm that won the prize, and the extreme delicacy of caution secured it. He had no confidant, and leaned upon no man's arm but his own.

We have already adverted to the fact of his insufficiency of means in support of a domestic establishment, and it was very generally rumoured that his wife's talents were the means to be employed, but the idea was never entertained by Sheridan; it could not be entertained; he was the last man on earth who could render himself a pensioner on his wife—a recipient of the fortunes which might have been obtained by her splendid professional talents. He disdained the thought, as he afterwards frequently declared. No, he married her for herself alone, and he publicly avowed that all his energies should be exerted to secure, by his own individual means, the domestic comfort and happiness of his bride.

Prior to the marriage, Linley had entered into an engagement for his daughter, to sing at the grand musical meeting for the benefit of the three choirs of Hereford, Glocester, and Worcester, which was to be held at Worcester for that year. Linley had received the money, in part, beforehand; but such was the inflexible determination of Sheridan, assuming to himself the rights of a husband, and that he was not bound by the act of her father, that he insisted on the return of the money which had been received, accompanied

by the declaration that Mrs. Sheridan would never appear as a public singer; nor was it but by the most urgent appeals on the part of a great public charity, that he could be prevailed upon to rescind his resolution. But as we consider the matter in question as of great importance in developing the character of this extraordinary man, who could resist temptation whereby his honour and gentlemanly bearing might be impeached, even under circumstances of pecuniary pressure, we give his refusal in his own words, in an extract from a letter addressed to Mr. Linley, which has been preserved, bearing date—

"*East Burnham, May* 12, 1773.

"Dear Sir,

"I purposely deferred writing to you till I should have settled all matters in London, and in some degree settled ourselves in our little home. Some unforeseen delays prevented my finishing with Swale till Thursday last, when everything was concluded. I likewise settled with him for his own account, as he brought it to me, and for a friendly bill it is pretty decent. Yours of the 3rd instant did not reach me till yesterday, by reason of its missing us at Morden. As to the principal points it treats of, I had given my answer some days ago to Mr. Isaac of Worcester.

He had enclosed a letter to Storace for my wife, in which he dwells much on the nature of the agreement you had made for her eight months ago, and adds that 'as this is no new application, but a request that you (Mrs. S.) will fulfil a positive engagement, the breach of which would prove of fatal consequence to our meeting, I hope Mr. Sheridan will consider his honour in some degree concerned in fulfilling it.' Mr. Storace, in order to enforce Mr. Isaac's argument, showed me his letter on the same subject to him, which begins with saying, 'We must have Mrs. Sheridan, somehow or other, if possible;' the plain English of which is, that if her husband is not willing to let her perform, we will persuade him that he acts *dishonourably* in preventing her from fulfilling a *positive engagement.* This I consider to be the very worst mode of application that could have been taken, as there really is not common sense in the idea that my *honour* can be concerned in my wife's fulfilling an engagement which it is impossible she should ever have made. Nor (as I wrote to Mr. Isaacs) can you, who gave the promise, whatever it was, be in the least charged with the breach of it, as your daughter's marriage was an event which must always have been looked to by them as quite as natural a period to your right over her as your death; and in my opinion

it would have been just as reasonable to have applied to you to fulfil in the latter case as in the former. As to the imprudence of declining this engagement, I do not think, even were we to suppose that my wife should ever on any occasion appear again in public, there would be the least at present. For instance, I have had a gentleman with me from Oxford (where they do not claim the least right as from an engagement), who has endeavoured to place the idea of my complimenting the university with Betsey's performance in the strongest light of advantage to me. This he said on my declining to let her perform on any agreement. He likewise informed me that he had just left Lord North (the Chancellor), who, he assured me, would look upon it as the highest compliment, and had expressed himself so to him. Now, should it be a point of inclination or convenience to me to break my resolution with regard to Betsey's performing, there surely would be more sense in obliging Lord North (and probably from his own application) and the University, than Lord Coventry and Mr. Isaac. For were she to sing at Worcester there would not be the least compliment in her performing at Oxford. Indeed, they would have a right to claim it, particularly as that is the mode of application they have chosen from Worcester.

"I have mentioned the Oxford matter merely as an argument that I can have no kind of inducement to accept of the proposal from Worcester; and as I have written fully on the subject to Mr. Isaac, I think there will be no occasion for you to give any further reasons to Lord Coventry, only that I am sorry I cannot accept his proposal, civilities, &c. &c., and refer him for my motives to Mr. Isaac, as what I have said to you on the subject I mean for you only; and if more remains to be argued on the subject in general, we must defer it till we meet, which you have given us reason to hope will not be long."

The condition of the charity however, which would have suffered severely by the loss of its most distinguished feature of attraction, finally prevailed, and Sheridan's consent was gained to her last public appearance.

Mrs. Sheridan sang at the Worcester Music Meeting to the largest audiences ever assembled on any similar occasion; extravagant prices were offered for seats, and highly fortunate did he consider himself who, late in his application, could obtain even standing room with a glimpse of the fair enchantress. Upon no former occasion did she eclipse her performances at Worcester, which were to be her last. Her audience, in the muteness of a solemn silence, listened, en-

raptured with her lays, enraptured by those sweetly sublime and sacred strains of heaven-born harmony, delivered with a soul of exalted feeling, unequalled, unrivalled, unapproached. It was a melancholy pleasure she infused around; it was, as it were, the charmed notes of the dying swan, never to be heard again.

When the meeting was over, *she put the money which had been paid to her into the plate;* thus devoting her services to the charity which she had so abundantly enriched by her presence.

We hardly know whether to admire or condemn this chivalric spirit, considering all the circumstances of the case, his own actual poverty and his necessities; but having so resolved, we cannot sufficiently admire that inflexible firmness, resisting temptation, by which he so steadily adhered to his first resolution. Sheridan was not deaf to the appeals of charity, it was no departure from that manly decision which he had come to, of removing his wife from the glare of public life with all its advantages, which he disdained to reap; but when that appeal came forcibly on reflection, shewing how deeply that charity would suffer to which she had been engaged, by her withdrawal, he yielded—all subsequent offers for the services of Mrs. Sheridan were rejected in the most positive and frequently in the rudest manner,

while it must be remarked they would have insured him an income of several thousands of pounds a year.

In one instance, for the opening of the Pantheon in Oxford-street, she was offered one thousand pounds for twelve nights' performance, and one thousand pounds secured for her benefit, running over an engagement for seven years; thus affording them a positive secured income of two thousand pounds for thirteen performances in each year; nay, he actually refused his assent to her appearance at a concert of the Royal family, being, as he averred, inconsistent with and compromising the dignity of a gentleman. Even his wife's entreaties were in vain, who, disliking the profession, was still consciously desirous of contributing to his means.

Upon one occasion, being very closely urged, he exclaimed with considerable vehemence, "I am her husband, Sir, and I will neither let her out by the night, or by the week, or by the season, to gratify managerial avarice, or the equivocal taste of a miscellaneous audience."

He was very generally assailed, however, for a false and ridiculous pride, and an arbitrary exercise of authority, unjustifiable in the position of his affairs, while some few justified him on the score of delicate feeling and manly principle.

Among this number was Dr. Johnson, on the authority of Boswell, in his excellent biography of the great and learned lexicographer.

"We talked," says Boswell, "of a young gentleman's marriage with an eminent singer, and his determination that she should no longer sing in public, though his (her) father was very earnest she should, because her talents would be very liberally rewarded, so as to make her a good fortune. It was questioned whether the young gentleman, who had not a shilling in the world, but was blessed with very uncommon talents, was not foolishly delicate or foolishly proud, and his (her) father truly rational without being mean."

Johnson, with all the high spirit of a Roman Senator, exclaimed: "He resolved wisely and nobly, to be sure. He is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife sing publicly for hire? No, sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not PREPARE *myself* for a public singer as readily as let my wife be one."

We shall not criticise the opinion of Johnson; but no man can hesitate to commend its spirit.

Facts, and not comments, are our ruling guide: our portrait, Sheridan, as he was, in his thoughts, his aspirations, and in his pride. Devoting him-

self to his pen, and, by his own admission, assisted by his accomplished wife, he produced several fugitive publications, of which there are no remains identifying the pen that wrote them; still they must have possessed much merit to meet so ready a sale as that which appears to have been the case, since they were the only available remedy for immediate wants.

In reference to those days, Sheridan once smilingly observed to a warm-hearted friend, that "they were obliged to keep writing, writing, for the daily leg or shoulder of mutton, or no dinner;" to which his friend facetiously rejoined, "It was a *joint* concern I perceive." "It was," replied Sheridan, "and of which we *jointly* partook."

It was at East Burnham, in a small cottage to which they retired shortly after their marriage, that they enjoyed the most happy and tranquil period of their lives; and to which they frequently recurred in after days, when even prosperity had its stings and imprudence its transient sufferings. Prosperity is not always conducive to happiness; and, in the case of Sheridan, led to imprudences which cast away all that their better fortune had bestowed.

Love in a cottage, however romantic and delightful in contemplation, fatigues, in the mild-

ness of its temperature and the daily sameness of its enjoyments. With such a mind as that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, its charm could continue but of very short duration. That mind, restless in its greatness, panting for its development in its proper sphere of action, and eager of mixing in the gay circle of fashionable society, for which its elasticity had formed him—not that the love of his amiable and beautiful wife had abated, but in the ardency of that passion which had increased with time—his whole soul was bent on replacing her in the position he had found her—the beloved and admired; but with this special difference, not as the patronized, but as the patronizer; not as the follower, but the leader of fashion. Enthusiastic in the love and admiration of his incomparable wife, romantic in everything, he wearied, in her seclusion from a society in which he felt she would appear the grace and ornament.

The following lines cannot but be acceptable, as exhibiting the fervor of our poet, the warmth of his passion, and the restless activity of his mind:—

TO HYMEN.

Teach me, kind Hymen! teach—for thou
Must be my only tutor now—

Teach me some innocent employ
That shall the hateful thought destroy,
That I this whole long night must pass
In exile from my love's embrace.
Alas! thou hast no wings, oh, Time!
It was some thoughtless lover's rhyme,
Who, writing in his Chloe's view,
Paid her the compliment through you;
For had he, if he truly loved,
But once the pangs of absence proved,
He'd cropt thy wings, and in their stead,
Have painted thee with heels of lead.
But 'tis the temper of the mind,
Where we, thy regulator find:
Still o'er the gay and o'er the young,
With unfelt steps you flit along;
As Virgil's nymphs o'er ripen'd corn,
With such etherial haste was borne,
That every stock with upright head
Denied the pressure of her tread;
But o'er the wretched oh, how slow
And heavy sweeps thy scythe of woe!
Oppressed beneath each stroke they bow,
Thy course engraven on their brow.
A day of absence shall consume
The glow of youth, and manhood's bloom;
And one short night of anxious fear
Shall leave the wrinkles of a year.

For me, who, when I'm happy, owe
No thanks to fortune that I'm so;—
Who long have learned to look at one
Dear object, and at one alone,
For all the joy and all the sorrow
That gilds the day or threats the morrow;—

I never felt thy footsteps light,
But when sweet love did aid thy flight;
And, banish'd from his blest dominion,
I cared not for thy borrow'd pinion.

True, she is mine, and since she's mine,
At trifles I should not repine;
But oh! the miser's real pleasure
Is not in knowing he has treasure:
He must behold his golden store,
And feel and count his riches o'er.
Thus I, of one dear gem possess'd
And in that treasure only blest,
There every day would seek delight,
And clasp the casket every night.

Let the cold, calculating critic, carp at the lines poured forth by a soul full of warmth and sentiment, breathed in the sweetest strains that ever flowed from conjugal affection; ours is to trace out every line and feature in correct delineation of the man. The feelings, aye, and the failings of Sheridan, for they were blended, or rather, of one growth, springing from the same stem, and therefore are better and more faithfully gleaned from his own than any other source. We glean his thoughts, his enthusiasm, from his impassioned pen: teeming with tenderness, or luxuriant in the playfulness of a refined wit. We read him in his acts, in the glow of his genius, and radiating in the sphere of his improvidence. His was the master spirit for whom the world had charms, who basked in its rays, unshadowed: himself the

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light, round which the fashion of the world revolved.

The winter of 1773 was spent with Stephen Storace, the celebrated composer, and who, after Dr. Arne, may be considered as the founder of English Opera. "The Siege of Belgrade," "The Haunted Tower," "No Song no Supper," "The Pirates," "Mahmoud," &c., equally attest to the brilliance of his science, and the sweetness of his melodies.

In the spring following he rented a house in Orchard Street, Portman Square, which had been furnished in the most costly style for his reception. Of his ways and means in this matter we are left in no doubt, since the furniture had been all bought and paid for with his father-in-law's assistance, and the generous settlement of three thousand pounds on Mrs. Sheridan by her discarded lover, Mr. Long. Sheridan, on entering his new house, declared it was the dawning of his independence, for he was "the undoubted owner of the key of his own street door."

Happy man, no privation he ever endured had left its impression on his buoyant spirits; the provision of the day was the solace of his thoughts, the provision of the morrow beyond his contemplation.

Being upon one occasion sorely pressed by a needy creditor, who had a heavy payment to make

to-morrow, Sheridan replied to his intreaties, "Well, be it to-morrow, it is a favourite day of mine, to which I refer many of my obligations; and when to-morrow comes I hope we shall both be prepared to pass our accounts to our mutual satisfaction."

The opening of the Orchard Street house was the commencement of a new era in the lives of the Sheridans; it was not the dawning, but the consummation of his early aspirations for a distinguished position in the higher circles of society, and he had made the largest sacrifices to the attainment of this end. His house was open for the reception of guests of quality, attracted by his wit, the superior accomplishments of his wife, and the elegance of his entertainments. His dinners were upon the most expensive scale, his wines of the finest quality; while Mrs. Sheridan's soirées were remarkable not more for their brilliance than the gay groups of the most beautiful, accomplished, and titled lady visitants of the Court of St. James.

Mrs. Sheridan's routs were the great attraction of the season.

A friend, a warm and sincere friend, remonstrating with Sheridan on the instability of his means of supporting such a costly establishment, he tartly replied, "My dear friend, *it is my* means."

From Sheridan's past experience of the world well did he know that to boldly venture was the way to win 'the bubble reputation' which was his aim and end. Well did he know that struggling genius, in a thread-worn suit, in its painful efforts at celebrity struggling for subsistence, had a hard road to travel, and never reached the goal until the cerements of the grave had enwrapped its mortal part, and the tombstone was left in record of its fate. Sheridan's struggles were for the enjoyment of a living fame, which he reaped; and an undying one which he felt that his powers could ensure.

By the vastness of his powers, the supremacy of his mental energies, he accomplished all in the vigour of his early manhood: which with a talent equal to his own, but not so prompt and vigorous in its development, could not have in less than a life time of diligence secured.

In the midst of all these banquettings, these nocturnal receptions of the gay votaries of pleasure, attracted by his social wit and engaging manners; aided by the superior charms and accomplishments of his wife; Sheridan must have devoted much of his time to his pen. *We have heard him say* that he had in those early days stolen from his bed at sunrise to prosecute his literary labours—or after midnight, when his visitors had departed and the hall-lamp had been

extinguished, flown to his desk, and at the cost of a bottle of port, sat down to resume the work which the previous morning in its early rising had dawned upon.

The truth of this statement cannot be doubted, although it conflicts somewhat strongly with the opinion entertained of Sheridan's natural indolence; but he had played a deep and desperate game, one on which his fame, fortune, his all—even personal liberty, depended; creditors had to be satisfied, imprisonment for debt avoided,—terrors which, though constantly floating before his eyes, did not dismay, but strengthened him in his resolve, aware that he had no protection but that which he found within himself.

Naturally indolent, he could not be aroused into action but by excitement; then, however, there was no labour to which he was not equal.

Having formed acquaintance with the eccentric Frank Challie, a wine-merchant of great eminence, celebrated for his cellars of the choicest wines, and no less remarkable for his singular costume in preserving an obsolete fashion, and riding a grey horse with untrimmed hoofs and a bob tail, bearing the resemblance of the common cart hack. Challie supplied Sheridan's table with wines without being troublesome on the score of payment, too proud of the honour of being admitted to Mrs. Sheridan's parties to risk

the offence of importunity; and it must be allowed that Sheridan had the art of making this class of his friends occasionally useful.

On one of those droppings-in, Charles Earl of Surrey, habited as usual in his grey coat with black covered buttons, being present, Challie, delighted with his seat at the same table with the son of the premier duke, the reigning head of the aristocracy, was more than ordinarily satisfied with himself, and probably more available than he would have been under other influences. In the course of an easy conversation on the topics of the day, the Earl explained the object of his visit, which was to request the favour of Sheridan's company at Worksop for a week or two, being the commencement of the shooting season, and offering excellent sport on the family manor. Sheridan expressed himself highly honoured, but regretted exceedingly that he could not avail himself of the opportunity, from circumstances beyond his control, at the same time assuming, as another of his reasons, that his friend Challie had determined on *keeping him in port* for the whole remainder of the season. The Earl smiled, and Challie chuckled at the joke and the compliment, which he construed to himself.

"By-the-bye, Challie," said Sheridan playfully, "you would make a capital banker."

"A banker!" replied Challie, laughing heartily at the idea; "a banker, Mr. Sheridan! why so? A banker and a wine merchant?"

"The exact thing, my dear friend; for, uniting the business of the wine-merchant and banker, you could manage a capital business: since those who took your *draughts* the over-night you could reciprocate by honouring their *drafts* in the morning."

Rather far-fetched, but leading to a point by aiming at a loan.

It is not certain that some of our cynical friends, whose avocations are of the inquisitorial character, of breaking heretics on the wheel for the sake of confession, will not remove from the shoulders of Sheridan the responsibility of this joke. We remember something like it in a farce called "The Village Lawyer," but we believe the Village Lawyer was not at that time in existence. In the latter case the joke is, that by a union between the wine merchant and the apothecary, he who takes his wine in the evening will be sure to require the apothecary in the morning.

Be that as it may, Sheridan's joke told, Challie became the banker in the morning, in answer to a draft of five hundred pounds.

It was at this time, and under these circumstances, that he wrote his inimitable comedy of

"The Rivals." In a letter to Mr. Linley he thus adverts to his muse, and his expectations:—

"I have been very seriously at work on a book which I am just sending to the press, and which I think will do me some credit, if it leads to nothing else. However, the profitable affair is of another nature.

"There will be a comedy of mine in rehearsal at Covent Garden within a few days. I did not set to work on it until within a few days of my setting out for Crome, so you may think I have not for the last six weeks been very idle. I have done it at Mr. Harris, the manager's, own request. It is now complete, in his hands, and preparing for the stage. He and some of his friends also, who have heard it, assure me in the most flattering terms that there is not a doubt of its success. It will be very well played, and Harris tells me that the least shilling I shall get (if it succeeds) will be six hundred pounds. I shall make no secret of it towards the time of its representation, that it may not lose any support my friends can give it. I had not written a line two months ago, except a scene or two which I believe *you have seen* in an *odd act of a farce.*"

On this admission his commentators have partly based their idle theory of the labour with which he produced.

The 17th day of January 1774, gave public

birth to the first dramatic production of his unrivalled pen, brought out under the title of "The Rivals," a comedy in five acts, which in several of its features, bears, many think, the impress of his own love adventures, and a startling likeness of a few of the Bath notables.

The day has passed for offering a critical opinion on the merits of this comedy. And the meagre vanity of dissecting, questioning, and damning with faint praise, we leave to the Dunciads whose own condemnation has been pronounced by three generations of an enlightened people, whose discernment has sustained the genius of the author, and placed it in the highest rank of classic comedy, as being replete with wit and sentiment admirably delineative of character, and perfect in its construction.

On the first night of its representation we are free to admit it was but indifferently received; but, cool as was its reception, it was a great and signal triumph of the young author, then only in the twenty-fourth year of his age, and his first venture. When we consider the mixed assembly collected together on the first representation of a new play to pronounce upon its merits, and to fix its final doom, and also the frequent inefficiency of the author with reference to stage requirement in all its various details, and the

management of the scenes, it is not to be wondered that it was not so warmly applauded as its friends had anticipated.

Some of the scenes were too lengthy; and the comedy, on the whole, far exceeding in quantity the limits of time allotted for representation; the pruning knife had to be extensively resorted to, to reduce it to proper limits, and the unlucky individual who had been cast for Sir Lucius O'Trigger to be displaced for one who had a better understanding of the part. These, however, are no more than the usual imperfections of a first performance, and for which due allowance should be at all times made.

Under all these circumstances combined, we reiterate, the coolness of its reception was by no means equivocal, of the high reputation it had yet to acquire. After a few days it was again produced with the necessary curtailments,—a new Sir Lucius in the person of Mr. Clinch, an excellent comedian, who threw an artistic lifefulness into the character, with a rich comic vein of humour and characteristic brogue that captivated the audience, and answered the highest anticipations of the author. It was on this occasion most enthusiastically received, and endorsed on every future performance by publicly-expressed opinion as the startling comedy of the day.

Clinch was handsomely rewarded for his talented personation of Sir Lucius, by the presentation of a new farce from the same pen, which he produced on his benefit night, under the title of "St. Patrick's Day, or the Irish Lieutenant," a lively piece, of no great pretensions, but sparkling with those gems for which the pen of Sheridan became celebrated.

Envy, detraction, or the vanity of pseudo critics, has repeatedly employed and exercised itself in vain in detracting from the merit or invading the claims of the author to originality in some of the characters he has drawn. Criticism has strained itself in vain to reduce the standard of his genius, but "The Rivals" holds its own in public estimation—its attraction, undying, imperishable, will stand with his other works, together in record of his genius, when the worm shall have eaten into the tirades of his traducers, and their names shall have been blotted out of the memory of man.

Sheridan's prospective six hundred pounds was more than doubled by its success and the liberality of the manager, Thomas Harris; but let it be remarked, his household expenses and the name of his fashionable visitants were legion.

The dazzling brightness of that glory which radiates around the brow of successful poetry

returns not its warmth alone to the heart which had inspired it, but shoots out its beam amid a wider expanse, and warms the heart which doubts and fears had chilled. The dun—no longer a dun—urging his plea for payment of his *little* bill, with his wife and large family, and a whole host of wants—trading on borrowed capital and torn to pieces by an inexorable creditor—now finds himself suddenly at ease in his circumstances—is most anxious to apply another page or two in his ledger to the service of his kind and generous patron—and is most earnest in his hope that his patronage will continue.

Sheridan, in the torrent of his fame and rising fortunes, had no difficulty in sustaining his household extravagances and the entertainments of the myriads that flutter in the sunbeams of prodigality.

"The Rivals" soon became the stock play of the provincial theatres, its fame had spread far and wide, and was produced by the manager at Bath, with new scenery, &c., from drawings taken on the spot of the localities referred to in the comedy. On its first night Thomas Sheridan, the father of Richard, that rebellious son who had declined assisting him in his wild theory of establishing a school of oratory, and thereby incurred his severe displeasure, and from whom he

had consequently been estranged for several years, now resolved on visiting the theatre, or, as he would have it made appear, had been prevailed upon to do so, to see the comedy and judge for himself.

Sheridan knew of his father's presence, and placing himself at the side scene, almost immediately opposite to his relentless parent, and fixing his eyes upon him, continued to gaze upon him throughout the performance with the greatest solicitude, tenderness, and affection, with a palpitating heart and an eye glistening with tears.

On his return home he was overpowered by his feelings, and, in reply to some questions put to him by Mrs. Sheridan as to the cause of his agitation, he observed, "Only think how keenly and painfully I felt, that I should see my father and my sisters before my eyes and yet be unable to join them." But this was Sheridan in his own likeness—that heart-likeness, which never faded until its pulsation ceased.

The success of the comedy ultimately triumphed over that inveterate obstinacy resulting from wounded pride in his child's (to use his own expression) rebellion. Prosperity is a great soother of long-cherished asperities when the contemned is in the ascendant. It is not uncharitable to assume

that it had its influence in ultimately bringing about a reconciliation between the father and son.

On the opening of the Covent-Garden Theatre for the season 1775-76, a new opera, from the pen of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq., with new music, was announced, and expectation was wrought to the highest from the known talent of the author, and the celebrity of his great comedy, of "The Rivals," which held its sovereign sway over the play-going world.

At length, on the night of February the 24th, it made its appearance before one of the most crowded houses that ever attended a first representation, every box in the house having been taken for several days before, and every seat secured, so that hundreds were turned away who could not obtain admission, for even the galleries were overflowing. Such was the advent of the famous opera of "The Duenna," as it was advertised in the bills of the day, introducing some of the most popular Irish airs, which had been selected for the occasion, with new and original music, arranged and under the immediate superintendence of Mr. Linley.

It is seldom, under such strong excitement, and in instances where hopes are so extravagantly formed, that the piece under represen-

tation is found to answer expectation; but so it was on this occasion: it transcendently exceeded all anticipation. This opera, which had nothing to recommend it but itself; no aids from costly scenery, machinery, decorations, and magnificence in dress;—this triumph of genius, which had no machinery but in the dexterous management of its own plot, no magnificence but in the rich sparklings of its own wit, no decorations but what were to be found in its more harmonious strains, was received with perfect rapture on its first appearance—an applause which rung through the entire building in occasional outbursts, and on the dropping of the curtain at the end of each act, with an enthusiasm unparalleled in the history of the stage. It is not our purpose to enter into argument upon the merits of "The Duenna;" it is enough to show that it was performed for seventy-five successive play-going nights, and never, on any occasion, but to an overflowing auditory, and every night with the spontaneous bursts of enthusiastic applause.

The fame of Sheridan as a dramatic writer was now established beyond measure. His wit, the dexterity of his plot, the management of the scene, the pleasing variety of his characters, drawn with a life-like vivacity, his incidents, trespassing probably here and there upon probability, but

still so irresistibly comic, and so seemingly inartificial as to overcome the objection. "The Duenna" was pronounced the opera *par excellence*, and will continue to hold its unequalled reputation amid all the changes of time, the customs, manners, and fluctuating opinions on matters of taste.

Sheridan, now in the twenty-fifth year of his age, had won the stake for which he had so ardently and systematically played; he had relied upon the strength of his own genius, which had not betrayed him; but led on by an unsatisfied ambition to new enterprises, impelled by an overruling power, which in his daring, dashing spirit he had not sufficient resolution to shake off; he threw away the staff on which he had securely leant, and entered on the wider field of precarious adventure, which commenced with an entanglement ending only with his days.

Among the earliest friends of Sheridan was David Garrick and Joshua Reynolds, at whose table he frequently met the celebrated Samuel Johnson, who loved him for his virtuous resolution in resisting his wife's appearance in public, and was not the less delighted with the brilliancy of his conversational powers. After the extraordinary success of his opera of "The Duenna," which had taken the public as it were by storm, Johnson

proposed him as a member of the Literary Club, of which he himself was chairman, and into which he was immediately elected.

This club was composed of the most distinguished men of the age, with whom it was the highest honor to be associated. It ranked among its members—Dr. Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edward Gibbon, the historian; Edmund Burke, Dr. Wharton, Dr. Franklin, Anthony Chamier, George Colman, *cum multis aliis*. No greater or higher testimony can be afforded of the admiration and personal esteem in which Mr. Sheridan was held, than that of his immediate and unanimous admission into this society.

David Garrick never failed in his friendship for Sheridan from the first moment their acquaintance began; and it is worthy of remark —in justice to the memory of that pillar of the stage which he had so long sustained, as well by the vigour of his pen, as his classic representation of the characters drawn by the immortal Shakspeare, a taste for whose works he had revived—that in his affections for the son, he had buried the remembrance of the hostilities of the father, the unfortunate pedant, who had vainly attempted to rival him in his fame, and reap the laurels he had won; the high opinion he had

formed of the singular abilities of Richard Brinsley being fully confirmed by his comedy of "The Rivals," and his opera of "The Duenna."

Garrick had for some time contemplated his retirement from the stage, and the sale of his interest in the theatre; but the love of his profession, at the head of which he stood for so long a period, and the desire to meet with a manager who would be likely to carry out his scheme of stage reform which he had so long and so laboriously persevered in, rendered him the more anxious to meet with a successor whom he might consider equal to the task. Reluctance in parting with his interest in the property, conditioned with his own retirement, was inferred by many as an evidence against his sincerity, and actual desire of secession. But it soon appeared, in the progress of the season 1775-76, that such was his real intention, and that he had found the man on whom his mantle should fall. Negociations had been for some time carrying on with George Colman, who ultimately declined; but he (Garrick) had still his eye on young Sheridan, whose muse was filling the treasury of the Garden, and impoverishing his own.

The property in the theatre was jointly held by David Garrick and Willoughby Lacy, and valued at seventy thousand pounds, which sum

was divided as between themselves in fourteen parts or shares of five thousand pounds each. This subdivision was arranged so as to enable either party to sell one or more of their shares at pleasure, or to suit convenience, without those impediments which might occur if the whole was held as joint stock.

Thus, Garrick's interest was one half, or seven-fourteenths, and that of Willoughby Lacy the same. Each share was valued at five thousand pounds, as already stated.

Sheridan, with whom the whole of the arrangements rested, had to procure purchasers for so much of the said stock as he himself could not hold. In a letter to his father-in-law, Linley, whom he invites to join, he says, "*I am ready with my money*"—ten thousand pounds for two shares. After a little negociation, Linley undertakes for two shares; and through the medium of Garrick himself, Mr. Ford is prepared to take the remaining three shares.

Thus, in the month of March, the whole was disposed of—

		£
Richard Brinsley Sheridan,	2 shares	10,000
Linley	2 shares	10,000
Ford	3 shares	15,000
	7 shares	£35,000

The money was paid, the transfers made, and possession to be given at the close of the then current season. Lacy was well satisfied in holding his own shares under the new management, which he warmly concurred in, while he at the same time expressed the deepest regret at the retirement of his friend and partner.

Much surprise had been expressed in most quarters where Sheridan's pecuniary condition was known, at the announcement of the event, and many conjectures whispered as to where the money could have come from. It was a great mystery and greatly magnified. Sheridan heard, read—for the public journals teemed with the engrossing subject—and said nothing; he suffered speculation to wander in its own mazes, and extricate itself how it could; every wild theory, however conflicting with each other, was established to conviction by his silence, but still Sheridan smiled and was mute. He delighted in mystery, and the queries of the gossips was to him a source of great amusement.

Impertinence alone could have dared to question him, but still he was questioned, and so closely, too, by one who presumed upon his intimacy, that we verily believe no one but Sheridan could have extricated himself from the dilemma but by revealment.

"Your importunities have prevailed," replied Sheridan, with a convulsive effort, assuming an extraordinary gravity of manner, and with a tremulous, subdued, half-suppressed voice, expressive of the greatest agitation, "and your curiosity must be gratified, but I had hoped to have kept the secret confined within my own breast, and to have borne with its consuming fires even to the grave."

"Mr. Sheridan, I—I really do not wish"—exclaimed the other in alarm; but he was interrupted ere the sentence could be concluded by the stern theatrical air and gesture of Sheridan as he advanced towards him, continuing, "Aye, Sir, to the grave, where we might both have mouldered and been forgotten."

"Really, and seriously, Mr. Sheridan, I have no desire to inquire into your secrets."

"But you have forced it from me, and involved yourself in inextricable danger. Be the peril, therefore, on your own head, since you have obtained from me a confession which no tongue should utter, or ear should hear, and which must necessarily involve yourself by the keeping of my secret in my guilt."

"Mr. Sheridan, this is really too serious a matter.—I beg your pardon—I really must beg your pardon, and—good morning."

"Stay, stay, yet hold—let us see that we are

not observed; that no eavesdropper catch the sound of our voice, or carry away the startling evidence of our daring."

"What, in the name of heaven, Mr. Sheridan, do you allude to?"

"Heaven has nothing to do with the damning deed!"

The friend, paralysed, sunk almost fainting in his chair, with the smell of brimstone in his nostrils and the configuration of Friar Bacon floating before his eyes. Sheridan approached the door of the apartment with slow and measured step, and, holding the lock in his hand, turned suddenly round upon his bewildered friend—"Swear! swear!" he cried, "never to reveal my secret!"

"Oh, I never will, positively—upon my honour never."

"I am satisfied. Well then,"—pausing for a moment, and assuming great anguish with remorse depicted on his countenance, he continued, "since it must be so, I have discovered"—and elevating his voice to the highest pitch, he roared out—"THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE!" saying which he darted out of the room, banging the door after him, and leaving his bewildered auditor to revolve the matter in his own mind, and digest it as he could. It was a capital joke. Sheridan was a

capital actor in his own jokes, and an admirable narrator.

Whether the astounding secret was ever divulged we cannot vouch, but the gentleman, who felt keenly the well-merited reproof, became afterwards Mr. Sheridan's solicitor during the embarrassments of the theatre, and was the well-known Mr. John Cocker, of Lower Grosvenor Street.

We see no reason why Mr. Sheridan should be bound to gratify idle curiosity in the promulgation of that which could concern himself alone in the prosecution of his business affairs, or that mystery should be assigned to a conduct which prudence might have dictated. Had Mr. Sheridan obtained the money by equivocal means, the tale would have been long since told to his discredit. The hunger of detraction, while it feeds on flies, is not likely to overlook the more substantial food prepared for its craving appetite.

The fact is Garrick, who had conceived the warmest friendship for young Sheridan, and still retained, under his proposed retirement, the most ardent interest in securing the prosperity of the theatre over which he had so long presided, and in which he had reared the fabric of his fortune and his fame, looked upon Sheridan as the only man within the circle of his knowledge capable of assuming the management, and sustaining its

high reputation. With these feelings he arranged the whole business with Ford and Wallis, his own solicitor, who took Sheridan's securities, and nominally advanced between them £8,500, leaving him to provide the remainder, with which he was prepared, and deposited in the hands of Wallis to meet the engagement; but the money was in fact advanced by Garrick, who took Sheridan's securities, which were discharged before the close of '78, in Sheridan's anxiety to reimburse his generous friends, and to disencumber his own shares. Now, herein lies the whole mystery.

Moore, in his Life of Sheridan, who could obtain no reliable information on this matter from the papers of the deceased, which had been submitted to his inspection, seems to have laboured under some anxiety in the investigation, which to ourselves appears to be of little importance, unless to create a doubt, an undefinable doubt, of some entanglement behind of no sweet-smelling savour.

He winds up with the following remarks, which we readily quote as happily expressive of the peculiarities of the indomitable man, and of the courageous, single-handed persistence with which he pursued his objects, without colleague, without advice—dependent alone upon his own energies. Mr. Moore writes—

"There was indeed something mysterious and miraculous about all his acquisitions—whether in love, in learning, in wit, or in wealth. How or when his stock of knowledge was laid in nobody knows. It was as much a matter of marvel to those who never saw him read, as the existence of the chamelion has been to those who fancied it never to eat. His advances in the heart of his mistress were, as we have seen, equally trackless and inaudible, and his triumph was the first that even his rivals knew of his love. In like manner his wit took the world by surprise, being perfected in secret till ready for display, and then seeming to break from under the cloud of his indolence in full maturity of splendour. His financial resources had no less of magic about them, and the mode by which he conjured up at this time the money for the first purchase into the theatre remains, as far as I can learn, a mystery to this day."

Everything being finally settled with reference to the Drury Lane property, Mr. Garrick went through a round of his favorite characters, tragedy and comedy, each for the last time. Mr. Garrick made his final bow on the night of the 10th of June, 1776, when the theatre closed for the season, and was handed over to the new proprietary who took immediate possession.

Garrick's retirement from the stage, and passing away to the enjoyment of a private life, stand recorded as an epoch in the history of our national drama. Let it also be recorded that the last act of his public life was equally distinguished for its princely benevolence, as for the vigour he displayed in delineating the character he had assumed as the last of his impersonations, and which collectively had obtained for him the title of the British Roscius.

The journals of the day thus record his last appearance, bearing the highest testimony to his deserved renown as an actor, and his inestimable worth as a man.

"Last night, the Theatre Royal Drury Lane closed for the season, with the comedy of 'The Wonder,' in which Mr. Garrick made his last theatrical appearance in Don Felix, generously giving the profits of the night, as a second benefit this year, to the charitable fund for the support of the players, &c., belonging to the house when out of employ, sick, or otherwise disabled.

"His performance was inimitable; never were the passions of love, jealousy, rage, &c., so highly coloured, or so admirably set off; in short he finished his comic course with as high a theatrical climax as he had done, the Saturday before, his tragic one.

" At last, the play being ended, during which every performer seemed to exert his greatest abilities, came the awful crisis when the Roscius of this country was to take his leave of the town in his public capacity. The scene was too distressing to be described. Let the reader conceive this universal favorite, impressed with all those feelings which his peculiar situation must call forth, advancing forward to bid farewell to that public which seemed universally to lament that they should be the melancholy witnesses of their own great loss. Then, after a short pause, as soon as he recovered a little from the first shock, he thus addressed them :—

"' Ladies and gentlemen, it has been customary, under my circumstances, to address you in a farewell epilogue. I had the same intention, and turned my thoughts that way, but indeed I found myself then as incapable of writing such an epilogue as I should be now of speaking it. The jingle of rhyme and the language of fiction would but ill suit my present feelings. This is to me a very awful moment : it is no less than parting for ever with those from whom I have received the greatest kindness. (*Here for a moment he was unable to speak until relieved by a flood of tears.*) Whatever may be the changes of my future life, the deep impression of your kindness will always

remain here *(putting his hand to his breast)*, fixed and unalterable. I will very readily agree to my successors having more skill and ability for their station than I have, but I defy them all to take more sincere, and uninterrupted pains for your favour, or to be more truly sensible of it, than is your most obedient and grateful servant.'

"Here he retired crowned with never-fading laurels, amidst the blended tears and acclamations of the most brilliant audience that ever was assembled within the walls of a theatre. It is to the credit of the new proprietors, that of their own accord they stipulated that Mr. Garrick should continue to keep that box which had been of late set apart for the accommodation of his family, to which he adverted on a former night in the character of Abel Drugger. Being asked if he had any interest in the theatre, he answered, 'I had some, I don't know what I may have.'"

CHAPTER VI.

SHERIDAN'S MANAGEMENT. — THE "SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."—WATKINS' INVISIBLE YOUNG LADY.

THE vast celebrity of the Roscius of the age—that master spirit of the histrionic art; which he by his extraordinary powers, his ripe conceptions, and artistic skill, had rendered a twin sister of the muses; ranking it equal with those with which it was so intimately connected;—that talent, which on the stage outstepped all rivalry, and which, aided by industry in management, had established the theatre high in public estimation—rendered it a hazardous experiment in any one, however distinguished for ability, to govern, direct, and control, with public opinion in its favor.

Garrick had retired, had bidden a last farewell to the stage, his managerial chair was occupied, but his place upon the boards was vacant—the great commander had left the camp, and the camp was in disorder.

Sheridan had assumed the management under

disadvantages which had escaped even his penetration: with a company which had lost its main feature!—it was the body without the head. The curtain rose as usual with no want of energy upon the part of its new director, but decidedly with a want of public confidence and support. It soon became evident — and we speak it without disparagement of the excellent company with which the theatre opened—that Garrick alone had been the magnet of the house, that he alone drew the team; but Garrick was no more an actor in the scene, and all was flat, stale, and unprofitable.

A thinned audience, a deficient treasury, a dissatisfied company, upon whom a gloom had been cast, with whom a despondence prevailed, were bad omens at the beginning of a season; and it does appear there was a lamentable want of energy shewn during the remainder of the season in cultivating public favor. Lacy, the owner of one half of the entire property, was dissatisfied; suffering from his follies and extravagances, always involved, he was disheartened in the dreary aspect of affairs, and before the close of the season, which terminated abruptly and disastrously by all these causes combined, the whole was in confusion, and the parties divided against themselves in squabbling with each other.

Lacy entertained the view of undertaking the

management himself, and disposing of a part of his interest to two gentlemen, Captain Thompson and Mr. Langford, who would co-operate with him in conducting the affairs of the theatre. Sheridan felt himself ill-used in the attempt at forming this coalition, and resented it by seceding from the management, and prevailing on the principal performers to follow him. This silly affair, after a little negociation, was happily arranged, and Lacy not only abandoned for the present the sale of his interest, but entered into an engagement, whenever he felt so disposed, to make the first offer to Sheridan himself.

The season of 1777 opened with scarcely brighter prospects than those with which the last had closed, with this only exception in its favour, that all former cabals had been subdued, and the management was left undisturbed in its proceedings, and in the exercise of its functions. But the progress of improvement was slow, and not in accordance with the energies of that master mind which had won its way to the point of its present elevation. Old pieces were revived, with very little of attraction, while a spirit of rivalry was kept up at Covent Garden, with a spirited succession of minor novelties, with the representation of "The Rivals" and "The Duenna," which were alternated with each other, undi-

minished in their attractions. Sheridan soon discovered that his pen was enriching the treasury of that establishment, and impoverishing his own.

"The Tempest" was produced, with the music of Dr. Arne, and new music by Linley, several revivals were put also into requisition, without either claim to merit or novelty, dragging 'their lazy length along,' neither inspiring or inspired. The public expectation was still in disappointment, nor was it better satisfied with his alteration, and adaptation to the improved taste; of Vanburgh's witty but licentious comedy of "The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger," which was presented for the first time on the 24th of February, under the title of "A Trip to Scarborough."

Great opposition was made to this piece on the first night of its representation, which, stripped of the licentiousness of Vanburgh, was not recloaked with that refined and delicate wit of which Sheridan was so capable, and for which he had become so celebrated. Public displeasure was great, and dissatisfaction in the new management expressed in no equivocal terms. Nor was it confined to the auditory, but it had extended to those whose duty it was to sustain the management by the exertion of the talent for which they were engaged, and no less their duty to that public by whose patronage alone they could be sustained. The truth is, the actors, if not in a state

of revolt, were in that of mutiny; and, with a slovenly disregard of the requirements of the stage, walked through the parts assigned them with perfect indifference, even as to the correct delivery of the text. For this outrageous conduct they were severely chastised on its second representation; the audience felt the insult, and resented it in a tone proving to the actor Johnson's memorable line:

"That those who live to please must *please* to live."

On the third night it was well acted and well received; still, as a feature of attraction, it wholly failed. It was a standing joke among playgoers, that "The Trip to Scarborough" was "a Relapse," or "Drury in Danger."

It was remarkable, yet duly considered no more than consistent with the general inexplicable conduct of the erratic Sheridan, that he should suffer the drama to linger even to the very last stage of its decline, and then by his magical means bring it back to robust health, with more than its pristine vigour. Was it indolence? No. Was it design? That is a question difficult to be solved. His heart never failed him in the adverse state of things into which he had brought the property committed to his guidance; his courage and self-possession never forsook him when reproof sat upon the brow of those he most respected;

but there was an easy, complacent smile upon his countenance when he checked opinion, and answered that it was "the odd trick that won the game:" and so reassured his questioners that he had something in embryo that should disperse the clouds threatening in their anger, and betokening the rising of a brighter sun than had yet beamed upon the fortunes of Drury.

That sun was his comedy of "The School for Scandal," the first four acts of which were put in rehearsal about the middle of April, and the fifth and last act on the third day of May, just five days before the first performance. It was written on scraps of paper, and delivered with the following remark, indicating that he had been relieved of a heavy load—

"Thank God it is finished!"

"R. B. SHERIDAN."

To which the prompter added—

"Amen." "HOPKINS, Prompter."

It must be observed, that it was and is the custom of all theatres, on the acceptance of a new drama, to have it copied in parts: the parts are then delivered to the actors engaged in the scene, who are summoned by the prompter to the reading of the piece, which takes place in the green-room. This is a custom of necessity, for it is only by

this means they can arrive at the object aimed at by the author, and a correct knowledge of the business to be participated in.

Sheridan, in his position of manager and proprietor, had it in his power to break through the custom, and did so: but the imprudent step can scarcely be defended by the warmest advocate of that peculiar policy which put to hazard the comedy on the first night of its representation.

There is no doubt that motive governed all his acts, and with this view we can scarcely reconcile ourselves to any other belief than that it was not indolence but design which had influenced and guided him in his apparently inconsistent proceedings. He had been teaching his actors a lesson, and a wholesome one, that they were not more necessary to the stage than the stage was to them, and that the talents by which they lived could little avail them, unless called into requisition by the author, and guided by the judgement of the manager. Sheridan, always aiming at a *coup de main*, never satisfied with the slow progress of a rising fame, had unquestionably concerted the whole plan of his operations, as well to check the vanity and bring to submission the players, as to establish his own supremacy. The experiment was a costly one, but it succeeded.

Fame was the prize he sought, money had no

influence; it was the sacrifice. He knew he had the public with him when he chose to invite it; nor was he ignorant of the advantages to be derived by awakening public excitement; he felt confident, from his former successes, that he had fallen in with the taste of the times, that he could satisfy expectation, and sustain his already acquired reputation.

It was the genius and good fortune of Sheridan that he never failed in his calculations: like a desperate gambler he ventured his last stake: and in the soundness of his judgment and dexterity of his plans he never failed to win.

"The School for Scandal" needs no panegyric, it is unquestionably the most extraordinary conception, the most inartificially wrought and skilful production of prolific genius, whether witnessed on the stage, or perused in the drawing room. Without discovering any plot in the course of development,—without any of those aids which intricacies supply, to keep up the activity of the scene—without any of those situations deepening in interest which excite our sensitiveness, and triumph over our judgment: we are led on from scene to scene by the wand of the enchanter, whose power never fails until the curtain falls. Solely dependant upon its own intrinsic merits, the delicacy of its wit, sparkling like a casket of

priceless gems, and the delineation of character which are so many sketches from nature, each in itself perfect, and inseparable as a whole; so exquisitely conceived, so admirably modelled by art, that the art is masked and unseen.

We have human nature brought before us in all its phases, and in so agreeable a form, that while wrapt in admiration of the skill displayed, we are not insensible of its moral teachings—of the exposed hypocrisy of Joseph Surface, or the want of principle discoverable in the spendthrift Charles. "The School for Scandal" is not without its moral.

Garrick himself attended the rehearsals, and no man was inspired with a greater confidence, or felt a greater interest in its success. It was no slight triumph, the confirmation of his judgment. Sheridan had now thoroughly established himself as an elegant and accomplished dramatist, he had arrived at that point in his literary fame beyond which there was no ascending. He felt this—he felt that in any future production of his pen, although he might equal his past labors, it was absolutely necessary to surpass them to meet the greed of public appetite. His fires were not extinct, his fancy was not reduced to the sere and yellow of its leaf: but he feared to contest with the palm he had won; he was heard to say "the

author of 'The School for Scandal' has little to gain, but a vast amount to lose." He feared to encounter opinion in comparison with the past, and that qualified applause which in the tameness of its spirit is in the negative of commendation.

Garrick's joy, on the authority of Davis his biographer, knew no bounds. On being complimented by a friend on his own management, who added—"In you, sir, we have lost the ATLAS of the stage." He replied—"Well sir, but I have left you a young Hercules to supply my place."

It is an item of interest, extracted from the journals of the theatre, which shews that "The School for Scandal" in the two succeeding seasons netted upwards of forty thousand pounds to the treasury!

In the following note from the pen of Garrick we have under his own hand evidence of the warmth of his friendship, and the deep interest he took in Sheridan's affairs; it bears date May 12th, just four days after the first appearance of the celebrated comedy.

"Mr. Garrick's best wishes and compliments to Mr. Sheridan. How is the saint to day? A gentleman who is as mad as myself about y^e^ school, remarked that the characters upon the stage at y^e^ falling of the scene stand too long before they speak. I thought so too y^e^ first night. He said

it was the same on y^e^ second night, and it was remarked by others, though they should be astonished, and a little petrify'd, yet it may be carried to too great a length. All praise at Lord Lucan's last night."

The inquiry after the saint, it must be understood, was an inquiry after the health of Mrs. Sheridan, who for her many perfections, was called by her admirers Saint Cecilia.

Willoughby Lacy, the former partner of David Garrick, having run through a vast amount of property, which had been bequeathed to him by his father, was reduced to his last resource in the sale of his interest in the theatre, the last remnant of his abundant means. He had already raised the sum of thirty-one thousand pounds upon the property, leaving thereby a very small balance to come into his hands, on its final transfer. Sheridan became the purchaser at the price of forty-five thousand pounds, which was liquidated by his assuming the mortgage: the payment of four thousand pounds in cash, and two secured annuities of five hundred pounds each, to Lacy and Langford, estimated at the value of ten years' purchase.

Garrick advanced the sum of twenty thousand pounds, with which, and the assistance of his partners in the purchase, the mortgage was re-

deemed. This fact solves the mystery with which Moore and Watkins have in their elaborate quartos, clothed the pecuniary transactions of the man whose history they affect to give with candour. Had they applied to the office of the late Mr. Albany Wallis, Garrick's solicitor, they would have found a perfect elucidation of the whole matter.

But it appears not to have been the view of either of those gentlemen to carry their investigations to that close point, whereby they might have satisfied themselves, and established their own integrity of purpose. Garrick's debt was duly discharged, and nothing was likely to remain among the papers of the deceased, in reference to pecuniary transactions, which upwards of thirty years had closed upon; still it was in the condition of the mind of these sapient judges, in the absence of such evidences among the papers alluded to, to imply by inuendo a doubt, only equalled in its ingenuity by the cool and placid Snake in "The School for Scandal."

Sheridan kept no diary; no journals of any sort; if he had done so, such an omission might have with some reason puzzled the examiners into his private accounts, who cast aside all consideration of the resources, which the theatre in its prosperity supplied, and which for the two con-

secutive seasons after the production of "The School for Scandal," netted a weekly return of £800.

It was not enough however for Watkins, in the license he had assumed, to confine himself to the practice of an accountant, for which he was utterly incompetent, but to take a higher stand in his attack on the memory of the deceased; and so to pour out the vials of his wrath on the sleeper in his grave, whose voice was no longer to be heard in its defence; nor did it need defence in its impotency, and the glaring subtlety of its malice. It was an attack upon that reputation which stood alone and unrivalled; which had no competitor—that genius which had been pronounced upon with universal assent, and placed him first on the list of the great dramatists of the age. Nor should we have alluded to the foul charge questioning the authorship of "The School for Scandal" but to refute malignity, and expose the utter imbecility of that mind which could reason in its inconsistency, and could give the slightest credence to its fallacies.

Thus runs the tale, upon the authority of Watkins, upon whose unsupported authority the whole thing rests:—

A young lady (now unknown), highly esteemed for her talents, the daughter of a merchant of

London, of the highest respectability (equally unknown), enamoured of the drama, and devoting herself to dramatic composition, is the author of "The School for Scandal," which Mr. Sheridan, assuming the authorship, appropriated to his own use, to the great wrong of the young lady in question, and in perpetration of a gross fraud upon the public.

That the young lady, having finished her said comedy, copied it out, and sent it, or delivered it, we don't know which, to the management of Drury Lane, for acceptance in the spring of the year prior to its first performance.

That the said young lady, being in a very delicate state of health, from what cause we know not, whether in the free indulgence of that vein of wit with which the comedy abounds, or—but we will be more indulgent—probably consumption; under the direction of her medical advisers, sought the Bath waters for relief; consequently she left her manuscript in the hands of the wicked manager to await its fate, and went down to Bath to meet her own, where she died, and was buried; but whether the respectable merchant of high standing—her own inestimable father, her mother, her brothers and sisters (*if she had any*), her uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends—were buried with her, we

know not; but of a verity we believe they were; and that too with the malicious intent of giving to the worthy Watkins, the lie direct! which every one knows was exceedingly personal. We are not responsible for the conduct of those unknown personages, and are very little disposed to render ourselves accountable. We can only avouch for the one fact, that no one has ever come forward as claimant for this *incomparable young lady*, and that neither heirs nor executors have sought, as of right they might do, to benefit by its abundant revenues; "The School for Scandal" having brought more money into the treasury of the theatres than any play that ever appeared upon the stage.

They must have all died out, about the same time; that's for certain!!!

Watkins, in his delusion, adverts to two facts, which he lays hold of with singular tenacity, as evidences strongly in favour of his argument. We shall reply to them, not on the score of their merits, for they are worthless; but that we are ill disposed to leave anything untouched which can refute the absurd charge he has so ineffectually laboured to substantiate.

He says, Sheridan knew of the reports which were in active circulation, and gaining strength by his silence.

He did! He knew that such whisperings were held in sly corners and secret places, frequented by disappointed authors and discharged actors; and was not a little amused at what he heard. The whole thing was too contemptible for notice. Where did the report spring from? No one could answer the question. It was mere rumour, never attempted to be substantiated, probably set afloat by some wag for the mere jest of the thing. How was it to be answered? If it had appeared in any tangible form, then Sheridan's silence might have been questionable.

His friends heard it, with whom it afforded food for much pleasantry.

"I hear," says Garrick, "that the literary clubs of the Cole Hole and the Cider Cellars, dissatisfied with your *denouement*, have determined on a closing act, ending with the funeral of the young lady, who is to sustain the principal part."

"Indeed," replied Sheridan, "then I hope you will be a pall-bearer, and conclude with an epitaph."

"Nay, excuse me there. My next public appearance will be in a *hearse*, in which I shall go through my part without a *rehearsal*."

The next fact on which Mr. Watkins placed such implicit reliance was Sheridan's refusal to

dispose of his copyright, although large sums had been offered for its publication: thereby inferring, that Sheridan did not dare to sell, or print, or publish, the surreptitiously-obtained manuscript copy of the "School for Scandal:" for, although he does not set forth his meaning, in these exact words, they cannot be considered as bearing any other construction. But Mr. Watkins should have made sure of his premises before he brought this charge, as evidence of proof. He should have known that so long as a play is continued in representation from the author's manuscript copy, so long does the theatre hold to its *exclusive* right, under the contract he has entered into with the author. But on the printing and publishing of the play, that exclusiveness terminates. By its publication, the right of representation would have been ceded to any manager who might find it his interest to place it upon his stage. Now, it may be reasonably asked, what amount of money could any publisher give, in compensation for that loss to the management, which must have resulted from its publication. It was actually at that time earning from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds a night, and has continued, from its first appearance to the present day, a period of more than eighty years, a never-failing resource of the managers of our theatres;

as an attractive substitute on the failure of any new comedy.

We have been speaking of the law as it then stood, not as it now is, since, by more recent enactments, the rights of the dramatic author have been materially extended.

We believe we have met the declaration of Watkins, with all its counts, its quibbles, its subtle reasonings, and deferential questionings, with fairness and effect. It may be asked why so much time should be thrown away on so worthless a subject. Our answer is obvious: to expose detraction in its nakedness; to throw back the shaft that was hurled at the grave; and return the poisons, to the source from whence they sprung; for it must be clear to our readers that had this *invisible* young lady any existence in fact; or had any legal representative on demise appeared with a copy of her manuscript in hand, which Watkins asserts to be in existence; there could have been no difficulty, upon the production of these evidences, in obtaining an injunction against the theatre—restraining the performance of her comedy, until a settlement had been effected; by which they would have established her undying fame, and realised, to her heir or heirs, a noble fortune. The subject is dismissed.

Sheridan was the last man on earth to undertake a routine of duties, commencing with the day, and lasting the day out; he was unequal to its monotony, and could not by any course of training, be confined to the traces of a mill wheel operation. His was a buoyant, bold, energetic spirit, guided by impulse; governed by no restraint; rapid to conceive; vigorous to achieve; but unhappily inert in consummation. He could not render himself to the details of a business life; the management of the theatre required a too sedulous attention, to adapt itself to his business capacity, which, it must be admitted, was but of a negative description. Too busily engaged in the flutter of a more congenial society, he had as little time as inclination to discharge the duties of management. His aspiring mind soared to higher ground, held in prospective a seat in the legislative assembly of the nation, where he might shine with as much brilliance, and more effect; to this, the great object of his ambition, were his thoughts diverted, and his energies directed.

All Sheridan's minor actions—if we may permit ourselves to use the expression, with reference to those matters, which were of a subordinate character, to the great ends he aimed at, were decided upon with very little of discretion; and less of

investigation into the fitness of the parties to whom duties were assigned. Thus while among his excellent company of comedians, he might have found many a worthy, well-practised, and popular man, well qualified to become his successor in the active direction of the theatre, who would have gladly accepted the appointment, subject to his control, he suffered his filial affections to overmaster his better judgment, in the election of his father, Thomas Sheridan, to that important position; and although with a thorough knowledge of stage business, derived from a long experience, no man was less qualified.

Stern and uncompromising: inflexible in the maintainance of his opinion: relentless in his enmity of those who disputed the soundness of his absurd theory—absurd only in the extravagance of its dictum and its application to dramatic exhibition—supplying rules of art in substitution of nature in its practical development; he obtained for himself an uneasy seat in his peevish and misguided government.

The actors were all of them of the school of Garrick, they had been trained in that school, and were but little disposed to retrace their steps, and fall back from the course which had obtained for them the highest reputation: still the theatre was prosperous. The author of the "School for

Scandal," had re-established its reputation, which had been dwindling away after Garrick's retirement. Sheridan at intervals revised, adapted, and revived several of the sterling old comedies, but in other respects suffered the stage to take care of itself under the management he had provided. He had formed new connections, new associations; mixed with the highest families, and ranked among his friends the most distinguished statesmen, of the two political creeds, at that time agitating the whole of the United Kingdom.

The subject of the American war was under general discussion—it had its powerful advocates, and no less powerful opponents; it was the one all engrossing subject occupying the public mind, and it is not to be wondered at in the reforming spirit of the age that Sheridan should take part in the all-absorbing question. His notions of liberty, and the unjust strides of power led him to advocate the cause of the people. He opposed taxation without representation, holding it as a treasonable conspiracy against the rights of the colonists; and was the first to maintain the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, with that enthusiasm which marked his general conduct. With that indomitable resolution with which he pursued any contemplated object, he entered into the political arena; adopting the policy of Charles

James Fox and Edmund Burke, the leaders of the Whig party, the steady and inflexible opponents of Tory administration.

Associations were formed and being formed in every section of the country under Whig banners; advocating parliamentary reform, and the cause of the American colonists: stigmative of the war in the most decisive terms as unholy and suicidal. His wit, which was adapted to the capacity of his auditors; his eloquence, which was poured forth in clear and lucid argument; strengthened the party with which he had united himself, and rendered him a powerful adherent and no less powerful opponent. The liberal press teemed with his lucubrations, which, although attributed to his brother-in-law Tickel, who shielded them under his wings, still, it was well observed by Perry, the editor of the "Chronicle," that in whatever form the articles appeared, they bore the unmistakeable evidence of their paternity.

It is amusing to contemplate Sheridan as a speaker at the assemblies of the people; and on the same evening, in the bosom of his family, joining in their merriment, and associating in their amusement—no longer the stern patriot, advocating popular rights, but the fond husband and the joyous host, frank, free, and jovial,

luxuriating in the enjoyments of domestic life.

"An evening at Sheridan's," said Charles James Fox, "is worth a week's waiting for."

Dr. Johnson was an occasional visitor at these "at homes" of Mrs. Sheridan, to use the fashionable phrase of the day; and David Garrick and his amiable wife rarely absent. It was here that you might meet with the lovely and accomplished Duchess of Devonshire, and her scarcely less accomplished and fascinating sister, the Countess of Besborough; Francis Duke of Bedford; the Cavendish's; and most of the *elite* of the day; joining in the cotillion to the violin of Linley, and the harp of the celebrated Madame Krumpolt's.

An evening at Sheridan's was indeed an "*at home*," beyond comparison with any other select assemblage of the fashionable and gay.

The wit of Sheridan, sparkling with vivacity, gleaming in here and there when the spirits flagged; and the sweet melodious strains of the enchanting mistress of harmony, Mrs. Sheridan, and her sister, Mrs. Tickel, gave a finish to the whole of unsurpassing richness and beauty. We may safely respond to the English Demosthenes, Charles James Fox, that "*An evening at Sheridan's was worth a week's waiting for.*"

But how are we to reconcile ourselves to the

fancy of seeing this remarkable man, at one hour the club orator of a political meeting, courting the applause of the vulgar; and in the next, with all the dignity of a polished gentleman, receiving as guests the most distinguished members of an elegant aristocracy.

It is difficult to comprehend these opposite extremes, emanating from the same source.

CHAPTER VII.

SHERIDAN AT DEVONSHIRE HOUSE—HIS INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINCE OF WALES—HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE PRINCE —POLITICAL ASSOCIATES.

Facts are stubborn things, not to be disproved, although they may be smoothed and softened down to meet the taste of envy in its bitterness, and detraction in its spleen.

The Court of St. James; resplendent in its high-born dames, its ducal coronets, and gorgeous pageantry; was not more inaccessible to plebeian blood, than the drawing-room of my lady the Duchess, where Royalty itself could only be received as an invited guest. The noble in birth was the true noble in soul; for without lineage there could be no nobility, and with the commonalty there could be no soul.

The poet, the dramatist, the wit, bustling out of the obscurity of a grovelling life; where poetry had no charm, and wit no point: it was evident—so thought the exclusives of polished life—that

nature never designed them but as the playthings of fortune, and the dependents on lordly patronage—to be elevated into notice by their own degradation. The day had scarcely dawned when genius was to be considered anything more than a mere qualified endowment—qualified to take one step higher than his lordship's valet in the domestic circle of the noble patron, who was pleased to extend his equivocal protection to the unfortunately fortunate.

> " Is there a man on earth, ye gods, I hate!
> Attendance and dependence be his fate,"

says Pope. Sonnets, birth-day odes, and dedications were the passports to my lord's dinner-table in his convivial hours ; but the poet's daring could never aspire to higher honours. The wit might there be found, the necessary adjunct of the wine and walnuts, like a court jester, to give zest to the feast ; but when the lamps paled, and the meats were cold, the wit departed, left to his reflections in his own miserable attic, to which patronage never ascended.

At no period in the history of literature had it ever attained to a higher standard than that in which Sheridan made his first appearance in public life ; and we may aver, at the same time, that at no former period had it diffused its powers, or invited to its shrine so many of the sons and

daughters of an ancient heritage; with whom poetry and the arts became a labour of love, and mental endowment a prevailing fashion. Still there was an exclusiveness in force without abatement; and the untitled aspirant for poetic honours, who lived by his genius, had little to gratify himself on the improvement of his condition. Dependence was his—servile dependence, and his strongest recommendation, adulation.

Sheridan, whose aim was distinction, and had gained it pre-eminently by his wonderful abilities, in their powerful exercise; was not insensitive of his own position, or of those prejudices which had beset him even in youth. The "player's boy" was the taunt that met his ears at Harrow; and the "player's son" lingered in his ears and in his thoughts for ever after. It was the pivot on which his resolved actions turned; it was the guide of his future life; it was the stepping-stone by which he ascended. The thought was uppermost that the "player's boy," unguided, unadvised, should carve out the steps of his own ladder, unaided but by the efforts of his own genius, and the resistless force of his resolution. The thought was boyish, but it was retained in manhood.

"It was to this resolution," said Sheridan, in admonishing his son, Thomas, just then advancing

into manhood, "that I principally owed the successful issue of all my early enterprises, and resented the insult offered, through me, to my dearly-beloved father. It was my sheet-anchor on the one hand, and the measure of my resentment on the other. I had read the fable of the man and the ass; I imprinted it on memory, and treasured it there as my monitor on all occasions."

"My dear father, that is all very well for you," replied his son; "but I much doubt whether the argument would hold good with me."

"And why not, Tom? every tree brings forth fruit of its own kind, which ripens in proportion to the nourishment afforded to its root, and the training extended to its growth."

"But, father, how say you if the fruit does not ripen equally on the same tree, which you know it does not?"

"True, Tom, true; and that makes my argument: nourish thought: train it well: be the master of your own secret: yourself your only counsellor: and your fruits will ripen to the gathering, in the midst of blight and mildew."

It was a remarkable characteristic of Sheridan, that, with that extreme sensitiveness on the subject to which we have already alluded, he entertained not the slightest ill-feeling to those

schoolmates who had taunted him in his youth: while it more closely bound his affections to his parent: whose alliance with the stage resulted from his theory of practical oratory; for he was not an actor professionally educated, and only adopted the stage with the view of becoming its reformer.

Sheridan's unyielding pride, could never submit to the condition of dependance upon private patronage; nor could he bring himself to accept of a seat at any table, where he was not received as a guest, upon equal terms with those, ranking in the highest range of the classes, forming the *beau monde*. He had established a cordial intimacy with Mr. William Wyndam, Lord George Townsend, Charles James Fox, Edmund Burke, Thomas Grenville, &c., names illustrious in the historic records of the reign of George the Third; but they were no more to him in the ladder of his ambition, than political associates; distinguished members of the great political clubs in which he had been enrolled, but not the positive means by which he could arrive at the great end at which he aimed. The means must be his own.

Instead of waiting for invitations, or exhibiting any expectancy of receiving them from the noble dames, whose mansions were open successionally

to receive the world of fashion at their respective routes: Sheridan issued his own, in the name of Mrs. Sheridan, and rallied a successful rivalry to the high-born exclusives. The attractive charms of that sweet syren of song, whose romantic little history had won its way to every ear; the treasures of whose mind were unsurpassed: whose commanding virtues were the theme of universal admiration; brought to her soirées (not distinguished as routs) all that was refined and intellectual, in that elevated sphere, wherein rank might be found to pay due homage to talent, united to worth.

Mrs. Sheridan's "at home" was the fashion of the season, as we have in a former place observed; they were occasionally attended, on express invitation, by the Duchess of Devonshire; upon the introduction of Charles James Fox; who, in her condescension in attending these evening parties, still hesitated in extending a return reception at her own. To violate the arbitrary rules laid down by an aristocratic confederacy, was not to be done but by serious deliberation, even by the duchess herself, who was the leader of the ton. It was a serious question whether she could introduce "these people" into her saloons, and extend to them those courtesies to which, as invited guests, they were entitled; without impugning

her own dignity and commanding station. They were *parvenues*, in the fashionable sense, and to throw around them her mantle was to identify them with the most favoured of her visitors, and give them the redeeming stamp of gentle blood.

The fiat was passed, and Mr. Sheridan's carriage "blocked the way" at Devonshire House! Mrs. Sheridan was crowded down by respectful admirers, and all of the *parvenues* were washed away in the oblivious waters of Lethe.

The noble house of Cavendish patented the blood of the Sheridans, and the patent obtained a general assent by the hitherto exclusives of an ancient peerage.

Either never attempt or accomplish was Sheridan's ruling motto, and it is a fact verified in his eventful history that he never attempted but he did accomplish. His modes were peculiar, his progress slow, pursued without any apparent effort, and his ends obtained without any development of the machinery he employed.

"It was at Devonshire House that I first met with the Prince of Wales," said Sheridan to his son, "then in the seventeenth year of his age, in the splendour of his youth, and the manliness of his beauty. "His was a noble presence, Tom; and as the eye rested on his form, it was struck with wonder and admiration. He was, indeed, every

inch a prince, a prince among his nobles in majesty and bearing. To see the flatterers fawning around him, cringing and frisking like well-trained spaniels; at his foot the women—ay, the women, Tom, the high-born—straining forward to catch a glance of recognition; with hearts fluttering, bosoms swelling, and eyes beaming with a voluptuous expression as the recognition was obtained. To me, Tom, the scene was entirely new. I was no courtier, had never basked in the sunshine of royalty, and must confess myself that I did not feel prepossessed in favour of the titled satellites, who seemed to hold honour, virtue—nay, life itself—at the disposal of the royal heir to the House of Hanover. The prince was attended by General Garth."

"General Garth," exclaimed Tom, "of whom so much has been said about the Princess Amelia and—"

"The same; but do not interrupt me: you wanted to hear from my lips the account of my introduction to the Prince of Wales, and to that let us confine ourselves, without reference to those malignant slanders which have no other foundation than invention."

"Excuse me, my dear father, I am all attention."

"I never have seen any man concentering in himself so many fascinations as the Prince of

Wales; with the bloom of health upon his cheek, and the vigor of manhood in his youthful limbs; he was the very personification of all that imagination could conceive, or a Phydias pourtray of beauty of form and gracefulness in deportment. There was a something about him in his easy address and gaiety of manners that won you to his side, and impressed you with the warmest sentiments in his favour. There was no want of dignity, but it was of that pleasing character which is best defined in one single word—gentleman. Full of life, overflowing with animal spirits, he joined in the circle by which he was surrounded the observed of all, but seemingly in himself unconscious of the homage he received.

"He was all condescension, so the phrase goes, but I don't like the word, Tom; there can be no condescension in the brotherhood of gentlemen; and the prince was a truer gentleman than those, who showered on him the praises of condescension. In the course of the evening Fox introduced me to him. He was accompanied by the duchess, who was leaning on his arm, and who claimed the privilege of introducing your mother. The prince held her hand in his, while he expressed himself, in the most delicate terms, highly gratified at a meeting which he had long desired,

—professed himself an ardent admirer of music; and while your mother blushed, dignified her with the title of the queen of song, and begged to be accepted in her service. His whole manner was graceful, delicate, and free of constraint.

"For myself, I must confess to you I was charmed with the liveliness of his remarks; with the generous expression of his kindly feelings; and his desire of cultivating a more close acquaintance—then with a graceful bow he turned away, with the duchess leaning on his arm, and in a few minutes he was standing on the floor of the ball room, twirling in the dance, with the young and lovely Countess of Jersey for his partner. We met again several times in the course of the evening; we champaigned together, promenaded together, chatted, and in the hilariousness of youth, and that delicate open-hearted freedom which cast away the distinction of rank, he left upon my mind an impression never to be effaced.

"Fox left early for Brookes's; and the Duke of Devonshire merely paid us a passing visit. He left to attend his club, from which he rarely absented himself. My passion was not for play.

"I could have written another scene for my comedy of 'The School for Scandal,' Tom, in the small talk of that evening—no matter."

It may be remarked, as a singular feature in the character of Sheridan, that, associated as he became with the most distinguished men; leaders in the popular political movements of the day; and who were unhappily no less distinguished for their inveterate love of play; that he never yielded to the vice, or took an interest in games of any sort. He might be seen at the clubs at Brookes's, Boodle's, or at White's, but never with the dice-box in his hand, and very rarely ever made a bet. "I never made a bet in my life," said Sheridan, "on my own judgment, that I did not lose; and never made but one against my judgment, and that I won."

From this time forward Sheridan was received as the most welcome guest at Devonshire House, that rendezvous of all the wits and beauties of fashionable life. He was the guest, *par excellence*, at her Grace's select dinner parties, and was cordially received at her little private *dejeunérs*, where he frequently met with the Prince of Wales. It was on these occasions that his intimacy with his Royal Highness ripened into a friendship, which continued without interruption, until that period when the Prince, assuming the regency, in consequence of his father's melancholy infirmity of mind: adopted his

ministerial cabinet as his own, and disappointed the hopes and expectations of his Whig associates.

It would be the manifestation of a great weakness to pass over those intimacies which prevailed between the Prince and the Duchess of Devonshire, without some allusion to those reports current at the time, which, while they charged libertinism on the Prince, imputed dishonour to the Duchess; but it is the fate of the illustrious in rank to be watched by the jealous eye in every movement, and suspected in every smile. That the Prince was charmed with the society of the Duchess was evidenced in his attentions; and that the Duchess was equally pleased in the reception of her royal guest, there can be as little doubt; but here was the beginning and end of the connexion.

The Duke of Devonshire was a Whig in his politics, and the Duchess a true and hearty adherent of that cause. Devonshire House was the resort of the leading Whigs of the day. The Prince had already signified his adoption of the party, and Sheridan had fallen into its ranks, under the standard of Charles James Fox.

Some idea may be formed of the friendship existing between Fox and Sheridan from the opinions formed of each other on their first meeting, which we extract from a letter of Lord John Townshend. Lord Townshend writes:

"I made the first dinner party at which they met; having told Fox that all the notions he might have conceived of Sheridan's talents and genius from the comedy of 'The Rivals,' &c., would fall infinitely short of the admiration of his astonishing powers, which I was sure he would entertain at the first interview.

"The first interview between them (there were very few present, only Tickell and myself, and one or two more), I shall never forget. Fox told me, breaking up from dinner, that he had always thought that Hare, after my uncle, Charles Townshend, the wittiest man he had ever met with, but that Sheridan surpassed them both infinitely; and Sheridan told me next day, that he was quite lost in admiration of Fox, and it was a puzzle to him to say which he admired most—his commanding superiority of talent and universal knowledge; or his playful fancy, artless manners, and benevolence of heart, which showed itself in every word he uttered."

CHAPTER VIII.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING—STAGE COACH ADVENTURE—CANVASSING STAFFORD—DEATH OF GARRICK—THE MONODY—THE SHAKSPEARE JUBILEE.

It is almost as criminal to hear a worthy man traduced without attempting his justification, as to be the author of the calumny against him. It is in fact a sort of misprision of treason against society.—Junius.

The theatrical season 1778-9 commenced under the management of Thomas Sheridan, the father: without the interposition of Richard Brinsley, who evinced a positive dislike to its routine of duties, and an ardent desire of prosecuting his still higher claims to public applause, in the political arena, as the advocate of popular rights. He had also become conductor of the Italian Opera House in the Haymarket, which he had purchased in conjunction with Thomas Harris, of the theatre Covent Garden. But his ambition lay in following in the steps of Charles James Fox, and taking part in those great questions of

the day, in which public opinion was so vehemently expressed, and so signally divided.

The American war was the all-absorbing question. The declaration of independence of the colonists, which had found its way across the Atlantic, was an exciting subject; and it is much to be doubted whether, in the arrogance of its tone, and its foul charges of tyranny and oppression brought against the king himself, in person, it did not multiply its opponents; reduce the number of its advocates; and strengthen the administrative power in the hands of Lord North.

It was a fertile field for the pamphleteer and the diurnalist; and the vivid pen of Sheridan was actively employed, in innumerable essays, and articles, which appeared in the public journals, in which he sustained the cause of freedom with his usual vigor, and sustained himself as a most valuable adjunct to the Whig party with which he had allied. Dr. Johnson had put forth a pamphlet in defence of the right of taxing the colonies, under the title of "Taxation no Tyranny," strongly argumentative, but wrong in its assumptions. Sheridan, who had produced several articles which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, denouncing its doctrines, sat himself down to a more elaborate reply, in which was blended much sound reasoning, with that wit and sarcasm which

distinguished all the productions of his pen; but indolence or procrastination delayed its appearance until the time had gone by and its interest had ceased. It was never published, never finished; it was found among his papers at his decease, in record of his powers; and a memorial of his strange and unaccountable negligence, in matters of the deepest interest.

He had placed himself in that position, by which he might assure himself, with ordinary diligence, of a seat in parliament; it was the object nearest his heart—it was the starting point of his ambition. He had discarded all idea of advancing upon his dramatic fame; and yet he was materially neglectful of the means, by which he might have secured to himself the nomination to a close borough, without incurring the risk and expense of a contested election. But Sheridan was himself alone the arbiter of his own will, the founder of his own greatness. He could not but be sensible of the popularity he had acquired. He rested upon the strength of his name; upon the principles he had avowed; upon the tumultuous applause which had continually greeted him on all public occasions; and, with these for his buckler and shield, he determined on a personal canvass of those burghers, he might count upon as the most likely to become his consti-

tuents. Several boroughs had been named to him by influential friends whose influence was at his service, more particularly Honiton and Stafford, between which he wavered to risk his chance of success on the forthcoming general election, which was near at hand. Honiton appeared doubtful; Stafford promising; the more so that he had joined interest with the then present incumbent, Mr. Monckton; a man of considerable influence with the electors, and whose return was certain. It was settled they should canvass for each other, and go to the poll upon the same ticket.

On one of those occasional visits, when Sheridan was returning to London in high spirits at the apparent success of his operations: when he had taken his claret with the corporation; and afterwards, as he facetiously observed, swallowing Staffordshire ale at a supper of mutton and turnips, and ponderous legs of pork, and pease pudding—eating his way into the confidence of the burghers—he met with three strangers in the coach in which he had secured the only vacant seat. Politics was the order of the day; it was therefore not at all remarkable, that the three insides should pass away the time in investigating the character and qualification of the several candidates, who were proposed for nomina-

tion for the county of Stafford and also the borough. Sheridan sat upon thorns, as his own name was introduced, not in the most laudatory terms, and that of his colleague, Monckton, with very little more ceremony. Where all concurred in opinion, there could be but very little argument; but the conversation, which was conducted between themselves, was not at all of a tranquilizing nature to their fellow traveller. The principal spokesman sat immediately opposite to Sheridan; with great vehemence he attacked Monckton as a madman or a fool, he did not know which, for taking under his wing the adventurer, Sheridan; in the scandalous effort of bolstering him into the House of Commons. "No matter, he has lost his own election, and that of his chum necessarily follows."

This was not a very cheering view of his position, but Sheridan kept his patience and his seat.

"I have some doubts, sir," said one of the trio, in reply, "of the correctness of your judgment in this matter. The wish is often father to the thought, and I could wish it may be so; but I cannot deceive myself by false assumptions in the teeth of evidences unmistakeable; Monckton is popular: and I believe his popularity is rather increased than diminished by his coalition with Sheridan."

Sheridan breathed more freely.

"Who is this Sheridan?" yawned out the other voice composing the trio. "Is that the man that wrote the play—devilish clever fellow that, and I am told a very funny fellow too."

"That's the man, sir, that's the man," replied number one, "a low fellow, a fit companion for horse-jockeys and grooms, so I hear; for I don't know him, and I don't wish to know him—a fellow full of quips, jokes, jests, and vulgar jocularities: would make an admirable mountebank."

Sheridan's pulse beat languidly, his seat uneasy.

"I think you must have been deceived in your accounts of the man," returned voice number two. "I hardly think it possible that such a person as you describe could have been the author of a comedy so replete with wit, and distinguished for its refined taste as the 'School for Scandal.'"

Sheridan's seat became a little easier, and his pulse stronger.

Voice number one ejected a growling "pshaw," and the colloquy was interrupted by the coach stopping to change horses, and the agreeable cry, "Sup here, gentlemen."

The passengers, alighting, soon found their way to the supper room, and the trio became a quar-

tette by the admission of Sheridan to join in the chat of the table; easy, lively, and agreeable with his travelling companions, the time passed nimbly, when the coachman's bawl summoned them to resume their seats.

"Devilish agreeable fellow that," says number two to his companion.

"Very much so; a very gentlemanly fine fellow," responds number one.

Sheridan, approaching number three, inquired —"Allow me to ask who is that lively, accomplished, and eloquent gentleman, who, I perceive, is of your party; and who is so vastly entertaining that I could not but admire him in our short journey here."

"That gentleman, sir, is Mr. Richard Wilson, the eminent solicitor of Lincoln's Inn Fields."

"Indeed! I have heard of him. A most agreeable gentleman, of prepossessing manners; very intelligent, and singularly *liberal* in his opinions on men and things."

Number three nodded an assent.

The travellers having resumed their seats in the stage, a brisk and lively conversation was kept up, in which, the ice having been broken, Sheridan was admitted.

"A stranger in these parts, sir?"

"Well, not exactly," was Sheridan's reply;

"more generally, perhaps, than particularly known; and only waiting my time to become better acquainted with the good men of Staffordshire."

"Do you propose settling in the county?"

"That entirely depends upon circumstances. My present journey to London is connected with that event; but when we have to deal with lawyers we can never calculate with any certainty on the issue."

"The law," returns number one, gravely, "committed to intelligent hands, and duly administered, is our only protection, the only security we have for our lives and property."

"You must pardon me," replied Sheridan; "I do not complain of the law—I am a law abider. My complaint is of its practitioners, who convert the law to their own ends, and thus abuse it—who will pick the pocket of their client with a bland smile, and involve him in a suit for the sake of the fees."

"Sir, you are severe and unjust; your remarks cannot apply to the profession generally."

"I shall be happy if you will supply me with a case where I may be proved in error."

"Many, sir—many."

"I presume you think so. But let me state a case in proof of my argument: and which I think will cover that of the whole fraternity. There is

a fellow who keeps his office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, high in his profession; who will sneak into your title deeds, and absorb the rental; he will *not* pick a pocket, but, soaring higher for nobler game, hungering for a fee, will, by his quirks and quidlibets, his chancery bills and his subtle pleas, corrupt the law: defeat the ends of justice: and drive his miserable, beggared client to suicide or the mad-house."

"Name, sir, name," exclaimed number one, in considerable excitement; "I know no such practitioner in Lincoln's Inn Fields; respectable men, sir—all respectable men."

"I do not think I should justify myself in naming the man," returned Sheridan, calmly; "for *I do not know him, and moreover, don't wish to know him;* but, since you desire it, I shall freely give you his name, leaving it to himself to absolve him of the calumny. His name, sir, is Richard Wilson."

"I am Richard Wilson," replied number one, gathering himself up in insulted dignity.

"Indeed!" said Sheridan. "Why then we are quits, for I am Richard Brinsley Sheridan."

"The devil you are!" roared out number three.

The joke was understood; Wilson laughed immoderately; the journey was pursued with great good humour on all sides, and Sheridan

gained a friend in Richard Wilson, better known as Dick Wilson: a friend that stood by him to the end of his life.

There was a peculiar fascination about Sheridan which disarmed prejudice; and always left him the gainer of respect and consideration from those who had previously been ill-disposed.

The theatre struggled along under the management of his father; and his pecuniary means more limited, arising from its short incomings. Ford and Linley were earnest in their entreaties that he would employ his inimitable pen in its revival; but an incident occurred that damped for a time his dramatic energies, and depressed his spirits.

It was the announcement of the death of his warm-hearted and benevolent friend, David Garrick, who died after five days' illness, on the 20th day of January, 1779, at his house on the Adelphi Terrace; his death was a great blow to Sheridan, who had derived from him many benefits, a cheerful assistance in his theatrical undertakings, and much good counsel.

No man in the position of David Garrick was ever more universally lamented. The first of actors, the most affectionate husband, the kindest friend, and the most generous of benefactors. In his public life he was distinguished as its brightest ornament. In private life, even at that intolerant

period, when to be an actor was to be excluded from polite society, he was so amiable, that he was not only the familiar companion but intimate friend of some of the first and most exalted characters of the age; by whom his loss was severely felt and most sincerely regretted. He had been for many years afflicted with a kidney disease, which took him off in the sixty-second year of his age. He died abundant in wealth; and by his will, having amply provided for his widow, to whom he was devotedly attached, extended his substance to every branch of his family; and the further endowment of the charity he had instituted, for the benefit of old, decayed, and destitute actors.

His funeral was conducted with the most marked solemnity, and his body deposited in Westminster Abbey, about two feet from the monument of Shakspeare, under a slab, with this plain and unpretending inscription:—

"David Garrick, Esq.

"*The pride and ornament of the Stage.*"

Sheridan attended as chief mourner.

Nobility followed him to the grave. The Duke of Devonshire, Lord Camden, Lord Spencer, Lord Ossory, Lord Palmerston, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, Mr. Rigby, the Hon. Mr. Stanley, &c., &c., in thirty-four mourning coaches,

while the streets were lined with groups of spectators, falling in with the train as it reached the Abbey. The service was performed by the Dean of Westminster; who, accompanied by the Chapter, met the corpse as it entered the Abbey, and followed it to the grave appointed for its reception: whilst the gentlemen of the choir sung an anthem, accompanied by the organ.

"The effect was awfully sublime," said Sheridan, recurring to the event; "grand, solemn, and imposing. The voices of the choristers in soft, subdued harmony, with the occasional swell of the organ, lifted the soul as it were to heaven. It was the homage due to worth and genius, and will live upon my memory till all of earth shall be forgotten."

It may be here remarked that the theatre was closed on this solemn occasion: a tribute of respect shown to the deceased which had never been done but in respect of royalty.

Sheridan was not remarkable for his piety, but an ardent lover of sacred music: and it may easily be imagined, the deep and endurant impression which such a scene would make upon a mind more than ordinarily susceptible. For several days he kept within his closet, and it was during that period he composed the beautiful monody which has been the theme of all praise, and pronounced

upon by Byron as an unequalled composition. It breathes the pure soul of tenderness and affection; is the evidence of sincerity and generous sentiment; alike sublime: an effusion flowing from the head and the heart.

VERSES BY RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

TO THE MEMORY OF DAVID GARRICK, ESQ. SPOKEN AS A MONODY AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

If dying excellence deserves a tear,
If fond remembrance still is cherished here,
Can we persist, to bid your sorrows flow,
To fabled sufferers, and delusive woe!
Or with quaint smiles dismiss the plaintive strain,
Point the quick jest—indulge the comic vein—
Ere yet to buried Roscius we assign
One kind regret, one tributary line.

His fame requires we act a tenderer part,
His memory claims the tear, you gave his art,
The general voice—the meed of mournful verse,
The splendid sorrows that adorn'd his hearse,
The throng that mourn'd as their dead favourite pass'd,
The graced report that claim'd him to the last,
While Shakspeare's image from its hallowed base
Seem'd to prescribe the grave and point the place.
Nor these nor all the sad regrets that flow
From fond fidelity's domestic woe—
So much are Garrick's praise, so much his due,
As on this spot, one tear, bestowed by you.

Amid the arts which seek ingenious fame,
Our toil attempts the most precarious claim.

To him whose mimic pencil wins the prize,
Obedient fame immortal wreaths supplies.
Whate'er of wonder Reynolds now may raise,
Raphael still boasts contemporary praise,
Each dazzling light and gaudier bloom subdued
With undiminish'd awe his works are view'd,
E'en beauty's portrait wears a softer prime,
Touched by the tender hand of mellowing time.

The patient sculptor owns an humbler part,
A ruder toil and more mechanic art;
Content, with slow and timorous stroke to trace
The lingering line and mould the tardy grace.
But once achieved—tho' barbarous wreck o'erthrow
The sacred fane and lay its glories low.
Yet shall the sculptur'd ruins rise to day,
Graced by defact and worshipp'd by decay.
Th' enduring record bears the artist's name,
Demands his honours and asserts his fame.

Superior hopes the poet's bosom fire,
O, proud distinction of the sacred lyre!
Wide as the inspiring Phœbus darts his ray,
Diffusive splendour gilds his votary's lay.
Whether the song, heroic woes rehearse
With epic grandeur, or the pomp of verse,
Or fondly gay, with unambitious guile;
Attempts no prize but favouring beauty's smile:
Or bear dejected to the lonely grove
The soft despair of unprevailing love.
Whate'er the theme—thro' every age and clime,
Congenial passions meet the according rhyme!
The pride of glory—pity's sigh sincere,
Youth's earliest blush, and beauty's virgin tear.

Such is their meed—their honours thus secure,
Whose art yields objects, and whose works endure.

The actor only shrinks from time's award,
Feeble tradition is his memory's guard;
By whose faint breath his merits must abide,
Untouch'd by proof—to substance unallied.
E'en matchless Garrick's art, to heaven resigned,
No fix'd effect—no moral, leaves behind.
The grace of action—the adopted mien,
Truthful as nature to the varied scene,
The expressive glance whose subtle comment draws
Entranced attention and a mute applause:
Gesture which marks with force and feeling fraught,
A sense in silence, and a will in thought:
Harmonious speech whose pure and liquid tone,
Gives verse a music scarce confess'd its own,
As light from gems assumes a brighter ray:
And cloth'd with Orient hues transcends the day.
Passions wild break—and frown that awes the sense,
And every charm of gentler eloquence,
All perishable! like the electric fire,
But strike the frame, and as they strike expire,
Incense too pure a bodied flame to bear,
Its fragrance charms the sense and blends with air.
Where then—while sunk in cold decay, he lies;
And pale eclipse, for ever seals those eyes;
Where is the blest memorial that ensures
Our Garrick's fame? whose is the trust? 'tis your's!
And O! by every charm his art essay'd
To soothe your cares—by every grief allay'd—
By the hush'd wonder which his accents drew,
By this last parting tear, repaid by you;
By all those thoughts, which many a distant night
Shall mark his memory with a sad delight—
Still in your hearts, dear record, bear his name—
Cherish the keen regret that lifts his fame;

To you it is bequeathed, cherish the trust;
And to his worth—'tis all you can—be just.

What more is due from sanctifying time,
To cheerful wit, and many a favour'd rhyme?
O'er his grac'd urn shall bloom a deathless wreath,
Whose blossom'd sweets shall deck the mask beneath.
For these, when sculpture's votive toil shall rear
The due memorial of a loss so dear,
O, loveliest mourner, gentle muse! be thine
The pleasing woe to guard the laurell'd shrine!
As fancy, oft by superstition led
To roam the mansions of the sainted dead,
Has view'd, by shadowy eve's unfaithful gloom,
A weeping cherub on a martyr's tomb;
So thou, sweet muse, hang o'er his sculptur'd bier
With patient woe, that loves the lingering tear,
With thoughts that mourn, nor yet desire relief,
With meek regret and fond enduring grief,
With looks that speak—"He never shall return!"
Chilling thy tender bosom, clasp his urn!
And, with soft sighs, disperse th' irreverent dust
Which time may strew upon his sacred bust!

A more powerful appeal, a more eloquent expression of the grateful feelings of the author for his departed friend, never sighed out its mournful notes in sweeter strains, or dignity of thought. It breathes the pure spirit of a great and exalted mind; paying its last tribute of affection to its dearest and most valued associate; whose active benevolence sought no other reward than that

which was to be found in its cheerful consciousness of good. No man was so extensively benefitted by the warm-heartedness of a friend as Sheridan by Garrick; and, to his honour be it spoken, no man was more grateful. The name of Garrick was written on his heart, and it remained there in all its freshness until its pulsation ceased, and the living world had passed away for ever.

Some would-be critics, or rather men who assume to be critics; with no other qualification than their own inordinate vanity; with a head disordered by envy; and a heart chilled by continued failures; have sought their own elevation by depressing the genius which they cannot emulate—have sought by dissection to disfigure these beautiful lines of a bard now immortal, to disturb their sweetness and originality of thought by strictures conceived in the freezing coldness of a heart inaccessible to the warmer feelings of our human nature. Such men have passed away and are forgotten. Happily the truer poet has endorsed the monody as among the sublime and beautiful. So Byron writes, and in this opinion the author of "Lallah Rookh" concurs.

We can hardly permit ourselves to pass by Garrick without an allusion to his Stratford Jubilee, which occupied the attention and excited

the warmest enthusiasm of every class of the people, from the peer to the peasant. We profess to give a history of "Sheridan and his Times," and although introduced here out of order, still it was in his "times" that Garrick conceived and carried out his great Shakspeare celebration, and which Sheridan, still in his youth, so warmly and energetically commended; while, as he has frequently asserted, he remained himself in obscurity, uninvited to its participation.

It is a remarkable fact that great events have almost always resulted from unpromising and abstract causes. It appears that a wealthy clergyman purchased the house and garden grounds of Shakspeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon. A man of taste in such a situation, and the master of so enchanting a spot, would have congratulated himself on his good fortune, and have deemed himself the happiest of mortals; but the luckless and tasteless owner trod the ground which had been cultivated by the first genius of the world, without feeling those warm emotions which arise in the breast of the generous enthusiast.

The mulberry tree, said to have been planted by the poet's own hand, became an object of dislike to this tasteless owner of it, because it overshadowed his window, and, as he thought, rendered his house subject to damps and un-

healthy moisture. In an evil hour this unfortu nate gentleman, who had little of poetry in his composition, ordered it to be cut down.

The people of Stratford, who had been taught to venerate everything which related to the immortal Shakspeare, were seized with grief and astonishment, when they were informed of the sacrilegious deed, and nothing less than the destruction of the offender, in the first transports of their rage, would satisfy them. The reverend gentleman was literally forced to shelter himself by concealment in his own home, to save himself from the fierce resentment of the townsfolk, and was obliged at last to leave the town, amid the execrations of a misguided populace, who solemnly vowed never to suffer one of the same name to reside in Stratford.

The mulberry tree thus cut down was purchased by a carpenter, who, knowing the value which all the world professed to put upon anything belonging to Shakespeare, very ingeniously cut it into various shapes of small trunks, snuff-boxes, tea-chests, standishes, tobacco-stoppers, &c., &c., which commanded so extensive a sale, at such lucrative prices, that it is believed at least fifty trees, of equal proportions, had fallen to the axe of cupidity to supply the wants of credulity.

The corporation of Stratford bought several of this man's curious manufacture of the mulberry tree; and, influenced by good sense and superior taste, they enclosed the freedom of Stratford in a box made of this sacred wood, and sent it to Garrick; at the same time, they requested him, in very polite terms, to send them a bust, statue, or picture of his admired Shakspeare, which they informed him was their intention of placing in the Town-hall. In the same letter, with equal politeness, they assured him they should be no less pleased if he would oblige them with his own picture, to be placed near to his favourite author, in perpetual remembrance.

This judicious and well-timed compliment gave rise to the jubilee of Shakspeare.

In September, 1769, a splendid and capacious amphitheatre was formed at Stratford, decorated with various devices. Transparencies were produced for the Town-hall, in which the poet's most striking characters were displayed A small old house, where Shakspeare was born, was covered over with a curious emblematic transparency; the subject was the sun struggling through clouds to enlighten the world, a figurative representation of the fate and fortunes of the much-beloved bard.

The jubilee lasted for three days, during which

entertainments of oratories, concerts, pageants, and brilliant fireworks, &c., &c., were presented to a company of spectators, drawn together from all parts of the country, never before equalled for the vastness of its numbers and the high order of society.

Many persons of the highest rank and quality, of both sexes, peers and peereses, some of the most celebrated beauties of the age, with men distinguished for their learning, the ripeness of their genius, and genuine love of the fine arts, thought themselves happy to join in the grand chorus of this high festival.

No company so extensive, uniting so many thousands of persons, so various in character, temper, and condition, ever formed, at least in appearance, such an agreeable group of happy, congenial souls.

Garrick's Ode on Shakespeare was that part of the general exhibition which most excited the regard and gained the applause of the candid and judicious part of the vast assembly.

Garrick always joining the strictest economy to the most liberal expenditure, brought the Shakspeare jubilee from Stratford to Drury Lane. The public was so charmed with this uncommon pageant, which was ingeniously contrived and judiciously managed, that the representation of it was repeated for nearly one hundred nights, closing with the season.

It is deeply to be deplored that, with such an example before his eyes as his friend Garrick supplied, Sheridan could not be brought to reason upon the only true means of attaining the ends to which his life and occasional energies had been devoted; of obtaining fame and fortune. He trod to a certain extent in the same path; and had been approved by the great master of the stage as his worthy successor; and if genius and ability had been the only necessary qualities, Sheridan was his superior in every thing but that one art in which he excelled all other men, and to which Sheridan could lay no pretensions. As a dramatic author, Garrick excelled his contemporaries in the production of lively farce: in the easy construction of plot, the liveliness of his wit, and the artistic delineation of the characters he drew, but they could not approach to the genius of Sheridan in his unequalled comedies, wherein his wit flashed with more brightness, like the jewels in a coronet; and the delineation of character attested to his knowledge of human nature, and the master hand in his admirable groupings of the scene. In this Sheridan excelled all other men who had ever written for the stage. As a poet, the pen of Garrick principally employed itself in the production of prologues and epilogues, which were warmly received and highly commended; but here again in generous rivalry,

the transcendant genius of Sheridan, outstripped his friend in the race of merit. As a manager, Garrick exhibited a taste of a very superior order in the classical arrangement and the correctness of his scenery—liberality without profusion—economy, not allied to parsimony. In the formation of his company he displayed a profound judgment. As its manager, the soundest discrimination in the elucidation of its various powers, alike serviceable to the performer as to the best interests of the stage which he directed. Nor was Sheridan deficient in any one of those points of management in which his predecessor so eminently excelled; the only difference between them was—the one pursued his object with indefatigable industry: the other lingered on it with slow and uncertain steps, halting by the way, exercising little of authority, and obtaining respect, more for his thorough good nature than from his firmness, promptitude, and decision. Herein was Sheridan's deficiency; his intolerable indolence thwarting those talents in which he so powerfully excelled, and which could never be drawn into action, but by some sudden and exciting cause: at least so far as the exercise of his pen. He was a perfect illustrative evidence of the truth of Johnson's remark, "That no book was ever written of a

standard quality that was not produced under the inexorable demands of a stern necessity."

Garrick amassed a splendid fortune by his management. Sheridan, with equal means, was content with little more than was necessary to keep up an elegant establishment; with habits not otherwise ruinous or expensive; nor was Garrick less costly in his household, or less hospitable in the quality and number of his guests, and the furnishing of his table.

CHAPTER IX.

THE THEATRE EMBARRASSED—THE CRITIC—FORD AND LINLEY'S STRATAGEM.

SHERIDAN'S melancholy impressions were but of short duration—he mourned the loss of his dearest friend; but that cheerful spirit, unallied to grief, which was his peculiar characteristic, soon shook off the tracing of a sorrow he had severely felt. The financial condition of Drury Lane was at a low ebb. His father, Thomas Sheridan, had resigned the management, which was committed to the hands of King, an actor of great merit. The affairs of the Italian Opera House were in a state of positive derangement, and the approaching dissolution of parliament, on which his highest expectations were grounded, crowded around him, demanding his best energies, and his most devoted attentions. Always great on an emergency, Sheridan unembarrassed by the difficulties which he had to encounter, and earnestly importuned by his partners, Linley and Forde, with the

rapidity of thought proceeded to the production of a new piece for the theatre, and with no less diligence to secure his seat for the borough of Stafford. He committed the management of the Opera House to Michael Kelly, the composer, a man of sound judgment and excellent taste.

A new comedy was accordingly announced in the bills of the day, from the pen of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the author of the "School for Scandal;" brightening the prospects of the theatre: extravagantly exciting public expectation, and thus restoring in a great degree that patronage which had been long on the decline, from the impression that he had seceded from the management.

Sheridan had long contemplated his "Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed," and it was expected that the "Critic" would be found an admirable vehicle for his abundant wit and humour; the theatre again became popular by anticipation, and was singularly well attended; but, unhappily, Sheridan was not to be permanently redeemed: he had impulsively capped the climax of his troubles; turned back the tide which had set in against him, and sunk back into his natural indolence.

"The Critic, or Tragedy Rehearsed," had been underlined as in rehearsal, before a single line of the manuscript had been committed to the keeping of the prompter. Strange man; eager to

acquire fame and fortune, both ready to his grasp, but too indolent to secure them.

At length the two first acts were sent in, affording some assurance of the remainder coming; and the piece was actually put into rehearsal in the vain hope of stimulating the author to its completion. Another and another scene followed in slow succession, as it suited the convenience of the man, who had launched heartily in the cause of public policy, and who was preparing for senatorial notoriety.

Sheridan would have been wholly unlike himself, had he walked in any beaten track; or adopted any other than that erratic course, which had surprisingly led him through his extraordinary enterprises with distinguished *éclat.*

The "Critic" had been announced for a first representation; the night had been decided on for the 30th day of October, but still the work remained unfinished on the 27th, notwithstanding the remonstrances of King, the manager; and the earnest solicitations of his co-partners Linley and Ford.

In the greatest alarm Linley struck upon an expedient, which brought the matter to a successful close. Ordering a night rehearsal, he then sent Sheridan an invitation to dinner, accompanied by a pressing request that he would not fail; and

also a private letter to Mrs Sheridan (his daughter), urging her influence over her husband for the further security of his object. Sheridan accepted the invitation, and, what was remarkable in him, was moderately punctual to the hour. After sitting over their wine for some time, Linley, expressing no earnestness, or dropping the least hint of his project; carelessly proposed an adjournment to the Theatre, while the supper was preparing. Sheridan assented; and they sauntered up and down the stage, while the rehearsal was progressing.

King, the manager, having received his instructions, politely stepping up to Sheridan, requested a moment's audience with him, and led him into the manager's room; where there was a brisk fire prepared—the necessary materials for writing—the prompter's unfinished copy of "The Critic"—two bottles of claret, and a tray of sandwiches. Sheridan had no sooner entered the room, than King disappeared, locking the door behind him; Ford and Linley, acting in concert; having entrapped their bird, whispered their determination, through the keyhole, of continuing his imprisonment in that room, until he had finished both the wine and the farce. Sheridan laughed heartily at the stratagem, and with great good

humour sat down, in obedience to the mandate of his merry jailors.

The wine and the farce were finished, to the great satisfaction of all parties. The rehearsal was proceeded in to its conclusion; and the evening trespassing heavily on the morning, was spent in the utmost harmony and glee. King, who had never before passed a convivial evening with Sheridan, declared afterwards, that the brilliancy of his wit upon that occasion; his playful sallies of good-humoured satire; caustic, but not severe; his exquisite delineations of character, in delightful anecdotes; was a play in itself. It was the memorable evening of his life.

The inimitable comic drama, or farce, or by whatever name it may be designated, was consigned to public opinion on the evening for which it had been set down, and "The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed," fully equalled that expectation which had been more than ordinarily excited. The house was filled to repletion, and never did an audience depart, more rapturously delighted with the evening exhibition, of any of the works of its admired author, than on this occasion. The actors sustained the parts allotted them with incomparable humour; seemingly partaking of the author's spirit, in the broad and sparkling satire on maudlin tragedy; and the frailties, follies, and

weaknesses of the floating ephemera: singeing their wings in the side and foot-lights of a theatre.

So true to nature were the sketches of the characters he drew, and which we believe were drawn from the life; that thousands to whom the originals were unknown, acclaime to the fidelity of the pen, that had wrought such perfect portraitures of the wayward mind.

The character of Sir Fretful Plagiary was intended as a broad satire and faithful hit on the strange peculiarities of Richard Cumberland; but the world thought, and the world still thinks, that there have been, still are, and still will follow, a continuity of the Sir Fretful *genus;* consequently the character so drawn was not "for an age, but for all time."

The Dangles of the stage are not less numerous, although Sheridan selected for his butt a gentleman of the name of Vaughan, a thorough Dangle in all stage matters, and professing to have a power and influence over the press and over managers. He was the quidnunc of the theatres, probably the founder of that great family which has abundantly spread ever since, with every promise of a long succession.

We cannot take leave of this wonderful produce of his genius, without quoting from its pages, in illustration of our remarks. Take for instance

the following scene with Puff, the author of the tragedy, proposed to be in rehearsal. This scene will amuse as highly in the closet as in performance. On its merits we shall make no comment, leaving it to the fiat of the reader's judgment.

DANGLE, SNEER. Enter PUFF.

Dangle. My dear Puff.

Puff. My dear Dangle, how is it with you?

Dangle. Mr. Sneer, give me leave to introduce Mr. Puff to you.

Puff. Mr. Sneer, is this? Sir, he is a gentleman whom I have long panted for the honour of knowing; a gentleman whose critical talents and transcendant judgment ——

Sneer. Dear Sir.

Dangle. Nay, don't be modest, Sneer. My friend Puff only talks to you in the way of his profession.

Sneer. His profession!

Puff. Yes, sir; I make no secret of the trade I follow among friends and brother authors; Dangle knows I love to be frank on the subject, and to advertise myself *viva voce.* I am, sir, a practitioner in panegyric; or, to speak more plainly; a professor in the art of puffing; at your service—or anybody else's.

Sneer. Sir, you are very obliging. I believe, Mr. Puff, I have often admired your talents in the daily prints.

Puff. Yes, sir, I flatter myself I do as much in that way as any six of the fraternity in town. Devilish hard work all the summer, friend Dangle—never worked harder; but hark'ee, the winter managers were a little sore, I believe.

Dangle. No; I believe they took it all in good part.

Puff. Aye! then that must have been some affectation

in them; for, egad, there were some of the attacks which there was no laughing at.

Sneer. Aye, the humorous! but I should think, Mr. Puff, that authors would be, in general, able to do this sort of work themselves.

Puff. Why, yes, but in a clumsy way. Besides, we look on that as an encroachment, and take the opposite side. I dare say, now, you conceive half the very paragraphs and advertisements you see, to be written by the parties concerned, or their friends? No such thing—nine out of ten manufactured by me in the way of business.

Sneer. Indeed!

Puff. Even the auctioneers, now,—the auctioneers, I say, though the rogues have lately got some credit for their language!—not an article of the merit their's. Take them out of their pulpits and they are as dull as catalogues. No, sir! 'twas I first enriched their style—'twas I first taught them to crowd their advertisements with panegyrical superlatives, each epithet rising above another like the bidders in their own auction rooms. From me they learned to inlay their phraseology with variegated chips of exotic metaphor. By me, too, their inventive faculties were called forth. Yes, sir, by me they were instructed to clothe ideal walls with gratuitous fruits; to insinuate obsequious rivulets into visionary groves; to teach courteous shrubs to nod their approbation of the grateful soil; or on emergencies, to raise upstart oaks, where there had never been an acorn; to create a delightful vicinage without the assistance of a neighbour; or fix the temple of Hygeia in the fens of Lincolnshire.

Dangle. I am sure you have done them infinite service, for now, when a gentleman is ruined, he parts with his house with some credit.

Sneer. Service!—if they had any gratitude they would

raise a statue to him; they would figure him as a presiding Mercury; the god of traffic and fiction, with a hammer in his hand instead of a caduceus. But pray, Mr. Puff, what first put you on exercising your talents in this way?

Puff. Egad, sir, sheer necessity—the proper parent of an art so nearly allied to inventing. You must know, Mr. Sneer, the first time I tried my hand at an advertisement my success was such, that, for a long time after, I led a most extraordinary life indeed.

Sneer. How, pray?

Puff. Sir, for two years, I supported myself entirely by my misfortunes.

Sneer. By your misfortunes!

Puff. Yes, sir, assisted by long sickness and other occasional disorders; and a very comfortable living I got by it.

Sneer. From sickness and misfortunes! You practised as a doctor and an attorney at once?

Puff. No, egad! both maladies and miseries were my own.

Sneer. Hey! what, the plague!

Dangle. 'Tis true, i'faith.

Puff. Hark'ee, by advertisements—*To the charitable and humane*, and *Those whom misfortune has blessed with affluence.*

Sneer. Oh! I understand you.

Puff. And, in truth, I deserved what I got; for I suppose no man went through such a series of calamities in the same space of time. Sir, I was five times made a bankrupt, and reduced from a state of affluence by a train of unavoidable misfortunes. Then, sir, though a very industrious tradesman, I was twice burned out, and lost my little all both times. I lived upon these fires for a month. I soon after was confined with a most excruciating disorder, and lost the use of my limbs. That told very well, for I had the

ease very strongly attested, and went about to collect the subscriptions myself.

Dangle. Egad, I believe that was the first time you called on me.

Puff. In November last. Oh, no. I was at that time a close prisoner in the Marshalsea for a debt benevolently contracted to serve a friend. I was afterwards twice tapped for the dropsy, which declined into a profitable consumption. I then was reduced to—Oh! no—I then became a widow with six helpless children; after having had eleven husbands pressed; and being left every time eight months gone with child, and without money to get me into a hospital.

Sneer. And you bore all with patience, I have no doubt.

Puff. Why, yes; though I made some occasional attempts at *felo de se*, but as I did not find those rash actions answer, I left off killing myself very soon. Well, sir, at last, what with bankruptcies, fits, gouts, dropsies, imprisonments, and other valuable calamities, having got together a pretty handsome sum, I determined to quit a business which had always gone rather against my conscience; and in a more liberal way, still to indulge my talents for fiction and embellishments, through my favourite channels of diurnal communication; and so, sir, you have my history.

We are not given to wholesale extracts from the works of our inimitable bard; or to critically inquire into the literary merits of his productions; which have stood the test of time, and rank on the shelves with the best of classic authors—not in the dusty corners devoted to the lettered dead, prized for their antiquity, and stored for fashion's sake; but in that thumbed and fingered range of

sprightly wit and classic humour, where *ennui* may find its antidote, melancholy its solvent, and the dulled mind its refreshment.

In the character of Puff; in the sparkling satire with which he enters into the field of hypocrisy and fraud; exposing the shifts of a studied craft; its delinquences and subtle daring; we cannot fail to see the puff of our own days, in no way amended, but retaining all the virus of the original type. The master hand of Sheridan here is evident—those vast powers of mind, which could glance at the serpent, coiling round the hand of credulity; and poisoning that, which was held out by charity.

But we have not yet done with Mr. Puff. Sneer is made to say, in reply to Puff's confession; that if published, *it might certainly serve the cause of true charity, by rescuing the most usual channels, of appeal to benevolence, from the cant of imposition.* And this we assume as one of our reasons for the quotation, at the same time that it illustrates the vivacious wit, and playful satire, that so eminently distinguished his conversational powers. Mr. Sneer is made to ask Puff if there is any mystery in his present profession.

Puff. Mystery, sir! I will take upon me to say the matter was never scientifically treated or reduced to rule before.

Sneer. Reduced to rule.

Puff. O lud, sir, you are very ignorant I am afraid. Yes sir, puffing is of various sorts, the principal are:—The puff direct—the puff preliminary—the puff collateral—the puff collusive—and the puff oblique, or puff by implication. These all assume, as circumstances may require, the various forms of—letter to the editor—Occasional Anecdote—Impartial Critique—Observations from a Correspondent—or advertisement from the party.

Sneer. The puff direct I can conceive.

Puff. O yes, that's simple enough! For instance, a new comedy or farce is to be produced at one of the theatres (though by the bye they don't bring out half what they ought to do). The author, suppose Mr. Smatter or Mr. Dapper, or any particular friend of mine. Very well. The day before it is to be performed; I write an account of the manner in which it was received. I have the plot from the author, and only add—"characters strongly drawn, highly coloured hand of a master, fund of genuine humour, mine of invention, neat dialogue, attic salt." Then for the performance. "Mr. Dodd was astonishingly great in the character of Sir Harry. That universal and judicious actor, Mr. Palmer, perhaps never appeared to more advantage than in the Colonel; but it is not in the power of language to do justice to Mr. King; indeed, he more than merited those repeated bursts of applause which he drew from a most brilliant and judicious audience." As to the scenery. "The miraculous powers of Mr. De Loutherburgh's pencil are universally acknowledged. In short, we are at loss which to admire most, the unrivalled genius of the author, the great attention and liberality of the managers, the wonderful abilities of the painters, or the incredible exertion of the performers."

Sneer. That's pretty well indeed, sir.

Puff. Oh, cool, quite cool to what I sometimes do.

Sneer. And do you think there are any who are influenced by this?

Puff. O lud, yes, sir; the number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed.

Sneer. Well, sir, the puff preliminary.

Puff. O that, sir, does well in the form of a caution. In a matter of gallantry now. Sir Flimsey Gossamer wishes to be well with the Lady Fanny Fete—he applies to me—I open trenches for him with a paragraph in the *Morning Post*. "It is recommended to the accomplished and beautiful lady, F (four stars), F (dash), to be on her guard against that dangerous character Sir F. (dash) G. who, however pleasing and insinuating his manners may be, is certainly not remarkable for the *constancy of his attachments*" (in italics). Here you see Sir Flimsey Gossamer is introduced to the particular notice of Lady Fanny, who, probably, never thought of him before. She finds herself publicly cautioned to avoid him, which naturally makes her desirous of seeing him; the observation of their acquaintance causes a pretty kind of mutual embarrassment; this produces a sort of sympathy of interest, which, if Sir Flimsey is unable to improve effectually, he at least gains the credit of having their names mentioned together by a particular set and in a particular way, which nine times out of ten is the full accomplishment of modern gallantry.

Dangle. Egad, Sneer, you will be quite an adept in the business.

Puff. Now, sir, the puff collateral is much used as an appendage to advertisements, and many take the form of anecdote. "Yesterday, as the celebrated George Bonmot was sauntering down St. James's Street, he met the lively Lady Mary Myrtle coming out of the Park. 'Good God, Lady Mary, I am surprised to meet you in a white jacket, for I expected never to have seen you but in a full trimmed

uniform, and a light horseman's cap.' 'Heavens! George, where could you have learned that?' 'Why,' replied the wit, 'I just saw a print of you in a new publication called the Camp Magazine, which, by-the-bye, is a devilish clever thing, and is sold at No. 3, on the right hand of the way, two doors from the printing-office, the corner of Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, price one shilling.'"

Sneer. Very ingenious indeed.

Puff. But the puff collusive is the newest of any, for it acts in the disguise of determined hostility. It is much used by bold booksellers and enterprising poets. "An indignant correspondent observes that the new poem called *Beelzebub's Cotillion; or, Proserpine's Fête Champetre*, is one of the most unjustifiable performances he ever read. The severity with which certain characters are handled is quite shocking, and as there are many descriptions in it too warmly coloured for female delicacy, the shameful avidity with which this piece is bought by all people of fashion is a reproach on the taste of the times, and a disgrace to the delicacy of the age." Here you see the two strongest inducements are held forth—first, that nobody ought to read it, and secondly, that everybody buys it; on the strength of which the publisher boldly prints the tenth edition before he had sold ten of the first, and then establishes it by threatening himself with the pillory, or absolutely indicting himself for scan. mag.

Dangle. Ha—ha—ha; 'gad I know it is so.

Puff. As to the puff oblique, or puff by implication, it is too various and extensive to be illustrated by an instance. It attracts in titles and presumes in patents; it lurks in the limitation of a subscription, and invites in crowds and inaccommodation at places of public amusement; it delights to draw forth concealed merit with a most disinterested assiduity, and sometimes wears a countenance of smiling

censure and tender reproach. It has a wonderful memory for Parliamentary debates, and will often give the whole speech of a favoured member with the most flattering accuracy. But, above all, it is a great dealer in reports and suppositions. It has the earliest intelligence of intended preferments that will reflect honour on the patrons and embryo promotions of modest gentlemen who know nothing of the matter themselves. It can hint a ribbon for implied services in the air of a common report, and, with the carelessness of a casual paragraph, suggests officers into commands to which they have no pretensions but their wishes. This, sir, is the last principal class of the art of puffing—an art which I hope you will now agree with me is of the highest dignity, yielding a tablature of benevolence and public spirit; befriending equally trade, gallantry, and politics, the applause of genius, the register of charity, the triumph of heroism, the self-defence of contractors, the fame of orators, and the gazette of ministers."

Here we have Sheridan in his night-gown and slippers: in his every day playful satire, revealing himself in the easy and familiar witticisms which displayed his thorough knowledge of the vices and follies of the age; and which afforded to his friends and companions at the table, an unequalled fund of brilliant entertainment, rich, various, and original. No one who knew him well, and reads his delineation of the character of Puff, but will be brought back to the recollection of that easy flow of natural wit, charming the circle crowding round his chair. No historian can paint the man

as he was, with a more vivid colouring than that which can be traced in the wonderful vivacity of his pen.

The tragedy under rehearsal is the production of Mr. Puff, and here again we have the unequalled powers of this extraordinary man, travestieing the tragic offerings of a pseudo muse, in a vein of the broadest humour; so truthful, as for a long time to banish it from the stage. The audience, on the first representation of "The Critic," felt, and warmly applauded those smart sallies, which were well calculated to reform the stage, and the public taste. Reform was his motto, to which he thus alluded in his admirable prologue to the same piece.

"—But some complain that former faults to shun
The reformation to extremes has run;
The frantic hero's wild delirium past,
Now *insipidity* succeeds bombast.
To slow Melpomene's cold numbers creep;
Here dulness seems her drowsy court to keep.
And *we* are scarce awake whilst *you* are fast asleep."

Of the rehearsal, which we cannot dismiss with a mere announcement; we must be permitted to extract a passage, that our reader may form some idea of the value of the whole, if he has never been attracted to its representation.

The plot is constructed upon the model of

modern tragedy, and developed in the usual course. The scene is laid at Tilbury Fort, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, where Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, a Spanish prince, is detained a prisoner. He falls in love with Tilburina, the governor's daughter, and hence the business of the scene. There is also an under-plot, which by curtailment has been thrust out of representation most undeservedly; for it is replete with the most exquisite hits at our modern novel and romance writers and playwrights, in the winding up of their productions; that has ever been conceived or submitted to public opinion.

Take the following as a specimen of his high tragedy:—

TILBURINA AND CONFIDANT.

Confi. It is not meet that he should find you thus.
Till. Thou counsell'st right; but 'tis no easy task
For barefaced grief to wear a mask of joy.

Enter Governor.

Gov. How's this, in tears? Oh, Tilburina, shame!
Is this a time for maudlin tenderness
And Cupid's baby woes? Hast thou not heard
That haughty Spain's pope-consecrated fleet
Advances to our shores, while England's fate,
Like a clipped guinea, trembles in the scale.
Till. Then is the crisis of my fate at hand.
I see the fleets approach I see—

Puff. Now pray gentlemen, mind. This is one of the most useful figures we tragedy writers have; by which a

hero or heroine, in consideration of their often being obliged to overlook things, on the stage, are allowed to hear and see a number of things that are not.

Sneer. Yes; a kind of poetical second sight.

Puff. Yes. Now then, madam.

Tilb. ——————— I see their decks
Are cleared—I see the signal made,
The lines are formed a cable's length asunder.
I see the frigates stationed in the rear,
And now I hear the thunder of the guns;
I hear the victor's shouts. I also hear
The vanquish'd groan, and now 'tis smoke; and now do
I see the loose sails shiver in the wind;
I see, I see, what soon you'll see.

Gov. Hold! daughter—peace; this love hath turned thy brain.
The Spanish fleet thou can'st not see, because
It is not yet in sight.

Dang. Egad, though, the governor seems to make no allowance for this poetical figure you talk of.

Puff. No; a plain matter-of-fact man, that's his character.

Tilb. But will you then refuse his offer?

Gov. I must—I will—I can—I ought—I do.

Tilb. Think what a noble prize.

Gov. No more; you urge in vain.

Tilb. His liberty is all he asks.

Sneer. All who asks, Mr. Puff? Who is —

Puff. Egad, sir, I can't tell. There has been such cutting and slashing, I don't know where they have got to myself.

Tilb. Indeed, sir. You will find it will connect very well, "and your reward secure."

Puff. Oh! if they hadn't been so devilish free with their cutting here, you would have found that Don Whiskerandos has been tampering for his liberty, and has persuaded

Tilburina to make this proposal to her father. And now pray perceive the conciseness with which the argument is conducted. Egad, the pro and con go as smart as hits in a fencing match. It is indeed a sort of small-sword logic, which we have borrowed from the French.

Tilb. A retreat in Spain.
Gov. Outlawry here.
Tilb. Your daughter's prayer.
Gov. Your father's oath.
Tilb. My lover!
Gov. My country.
Tilb. Tiburina.
Gov. England.
Tilb. A title.
Gov. Honour.
Tilb. A pension.
Gov. Conscience.
Tilb. A thousand pounds.
Gov. Ha, thou hast touched me nearly.

Puff. There you see she threw in *Tilburina.* Quick parry quarte with *England.* Ha, thrust in time, a *title* parried by *honour.* Ha, a pension over the arm, put by, by conscience. Then canonade with a thousand pounds, and a palpable hit, egad.

Our space will not allow us to do more; we must take a final leave of Miss Tilburina in her mad scene and last speech.

Enter Tilburina and Confidant, mad according to custom.

Sneer. But, what the deuce, is the confidant to be mad too?

Puff. To be sure she is; the confidant is always to do whatever her mistress does—weep when she weeps, smile when she smiles, go mad when she goes mad. Now, Madam

Confidant, you will keep your madness in the back ground, if you please.

Till. The wind whistles, the moon rises, see
They have killed my squirrel in his cage.
Is this a grasshopper? Ha, no, it is my
Whiskerandos; you shall not keep him.
I know you have him in your pocket—
An oyster may be crossed in love! Who says
A whale's a bird? Ha! did you call my love?
He's here, he's there, he's everywhere.
Ah me, he's nowhere. *Exit.*

Puff. There, do you ever desire to see anybody madder than that?

Sneer. Never while I live.

Puff. You observed how she mangled the metre?

Dangle. Yes, egad; it was the first thing made me suspect she was out of her senses.

Sneer. And pray what becomes of her?

Puff. She is gone to throw herself into the sea, to be sure, and that brings us at once to the scene of action, and so to the catastrophe.

We must take a parting glance at the under-plot of this amusing piece, not less rich in fancy, than just in its satire on the grim monster of ruling tragedy, in humble or domestic life;—in which to drawl out the agony—to keep the grand secret of the plot from peeping out, until the moment of its explosion; is considered the very acme of the art: and probability is cast off as a dead weight, operating on the ingenuity of con-

trivance, and clipping the wings of genius in its creative flight.

PUFF, SNEER, and DANGLE.

Curtain rises, discovering Justices, Constables, &c., &c.

Sneer. This I suppose is a sort of senate scene.

Puff. To be sure, there has not been one yet.

Dangle. It is the underplot—isn't it?

Puff. Yes—what, gentlemen, do you mean to go at once to the discovery scene?

Justice. If you please sir.

Puff. Oh, very well—Harkee, I don't choose to say any more, but i' faith they have mangled my play in a most shocking manner.

Dangle. It's a great pity.

Puff. Now then, Mr. Justice, if you please.

Justice. Are all the volunteers without?

Constable. . . . . . They are.
Some ten in fetters, some twenty drunk.

Justice. Attends the youth, whose most opprobrious fame
And clear convicted crimes have stampt him soldier?

Constable. He waits your pleasure, anxious to repay
The blest reprieve that sends him to the fields
Of glory! there to raise his branded hand
In honour's cause.

Justice. . . . 'Tis well, 'tis justice arms him.
Oh! may he now defend his country's laws
With half the spirit he has broke them all.
Go—'tis our worship's pleasure—bid him enter.

Constable. I fly, the herald of your will. [*exit.*

Puff. Quick, sir.

Sneer. But, Mr. Puff, I think no[t] only the justice but

the clown seems to talk in as high a style as the first hero among them.

Puff. Heaven forbid they should *not* in a free country! Sir, I am not for making slavish distinctions, and giving all the fine language to the upper sort of people.

Dangle. That's very noble of you indeed.

Enter Justice's Lady.

Puff. Now, pray mark this scene.

Lady. Forgive this interruption—good, my love;
But as I just now passed a prisoner youth,
Whom rude hands hither led, strange bodings seized
My fluttering heart, and to myself I said,
An' if our Tom had lived, he'd surely been
This stripling's height!

Just. Ha! sure some powerful sympathy directs
Us both.

Re-enter Constable with son.

What is thy name?

Son. My name is Tom Jenkins—*alias* have I none.
Though orphan'd, and without a friend.

Just. . . . . Thy parents!

Son. My father dwelt in Rochester, and was,
As I have heard, a fishmonger—no more.

Puff. What, sir! do you leave out the account of your birth, parentage, and education?

Son. They have settled it so, sir, here.

Puff. Oh! Oh!

Lady. How loudly nature whispers to my heart!
Had he no other name?

Son. . . . . . I've seen a bill
Of his, sign'd Tomkins, creditor.

Just. This does, indeed, confirm each circumstance
The gipsy told. Prepare!
Son. . . . . . I do.
Just. No orphan, or without a friend, art thou.
I am thy father—here's thy mother—there
Thy uncle—this thy first cousin—and those
Are all your near relations.
Lady. O ecstacy of bliss!
Son. O most unlooked-for happiness!
Just. O wonderful event!
[*They faint alternately in each other's arms.*]
Puff. There, you see, relationship, like murder, will out.
Just. Now, let 's revive, else were this joy too much.
But come, and we'll unfold the rest within.
And thou, my boy, must needs want rest and food.
Hence may each orphan hope, as chance directs,
To find a father where he least expects.

Exeunt.

In conclusion of our remarks on this admirable satire, which cannot be too widely circulated, or too generally admired, we must be allowed to add:—The parasitical family of the Puffs, notwithstanding their exposure, afford no prospect of their ever becoming extinct. They have become indigenous by long cultivation, and the rankness of the soil in which they have rooted. They seek their prey among the thoughtless, entwining around the early shoots of genius; or bolstering up the empyricisms of the dull pretender; whose purse is the cranium of his genius,

the means of an ephemeral notoriety—as the panders of the licentious—the tools of every species of quackery, and the general hirelings of the dishonest tradesman.

The Puff of Sheridan is considered as overcharged; from the fact of its uniting in one person, the varieties of the intriguing crafts and artifices, practised by the profligate professors of his infamous class; but the public has assented to the truthfulness of the family likeness; and disgust is softened down, by the playfulness of the author's wit, and the richness of the colouring.

We have been copious in our extracts from this piece, because we believe it is less familiarly known in the closet than on the stage; and in no one instance of his dramatic productions do we find so copious a discharge of his inexhaustible artillery, so adroitly delivered, and his genius so abundantly displayed; and for still another reason, that it is the most wholesome corrective satire ever yet produced upon the stage or introduced into the closet.

Corrective, inasmuch as it had its influence on dramatic writers, and not less in correcting public taste, which had learned to laugh at the fustian which it had formerly so loudly and vehemently applauded.

If any evidence were wanting in proof of the extraordinary influence of this entertainment on popular opinion, it would be found in the fact that the tragic muse could scarcely find a foothold upon our great theatres for several years after its production. Tilburina was so associated in the mind of the audience with every future heroine of the weeping muse, that it became impossible to resist the effects produced by the inimitable satire in its startling truthfulness; so that when the heroine wept, the house was convulsed with laughter. A situation more distressing to the actress can hardly be conceived.

This was the last dramatic effort of his magic pen; the last, but in our opinion not the least, in the breadth of its humour, and the pungency of its wit. It lay no claim to the sterling qualities of comedy, was of an order superior to that of farce; it had no classmate, but stood alone, if we may use the term, an illegitimate legitimate, having no parallel.

Sheridan himself laid no claim to "Pizarro" or the "Stranger," which were adaptations from the German of Kotzebue, or his rendition of the "Trip to Scarborough," from the licentious comedy of "The Relapse of Vanburgh."

They were not his own creations, and he never

quoted them, advancing any claim to more than the part he had taken in their rendition to the stage, and in compliance with the demands of an English audience, which, although the German mania was abroad, were not entirely German.

CHAPTER X.

SHERIDAN EXAMINED ON HIS POLITICAL PRINCIPLES BY A COMMITTEE OF BURGHERS—HIS ELECTION FOR THE BOROUGH OF STAFFORD—CLAIMS OF AN IRISH WIDOW —TAKES HIS SEAT IN PARLIAMENT—HIS MAIDEN SPEECH.

THE young and ardent, gifted in mind, enriched by observation rather than by books, is rarely steady to the point from which it starts, but flutters like the eagle in its flight; and, veering in the wind on which it sails, expands itself to newly awakened ideas, and soars again in the fresh vigour of its aspirations.

It was the peculiar property of that capacious intellect which grasped at whatever it conceived, with resistless force, and carried with a strategy undaunted by opposition. It was peculiar to Sheridan that whatever he touched he orna-

mented; that whatever he conceived he executed; in no instance without exciting admiration, and in everything excelling. It was no less in evidence of the soundness of his judgment and his indomitable perseverance. But it is lamentable to contemplate that no sooner had he accomplished the purpose at which he had aimed, than, resting on the laurels he had won, he sunk into an apparent lethargy, from which there was no arousing him.

A warm friend and admirer, interested in the welfare of the theatre, was earnest in his solicitations that he would write a tragedy. "O, no," was Sheridan's reply. "There is a full sufficiency of *comedies* of that class. I shall certainly not add to their number."

It is greatly to be questioned, however, whether Sheridan's playful wit and genuine humour could have been sufficiently subdued, to assume the tragic muse; and he was indifferently disposed to balance his reputation on a doubtful issue.

But he was now preparing to enter that arena to which all his aspirations led; his visits, consequently, were few to the temple in which his fame and fortune had been reared, and only then to the treasury, and to no other department of the theatre.

The dissolution of parliament brought on a

general election, and Sheridan's attentions were divided between the borough of Honiton, on the one hand, and that of Stafford, on the other. The election at Stafford preceded that of Honiton by ten days, so that it became desirable to secure the nomination for the last-named borough, until his fortune at Stafford should be decided. He had paid several visits to Stafford, and had thoroughly ingratiated himself with the people there. His agents were active and intelligent; but still he had a formidable opponent to contend with, although supported by the interest and influence of his friend Monckton, who had risked the security of his own seat in the service.

On the day previous to the election, Sheridan, with a full purse and a joyous countenance entered the town in an open landau, in which several of the popular members of the corporation were seated, drawn by four horses profusely decorated with the party colours, numerous flags and banners, with devices peculiarly adapted to the taste of the assembled multitude—"The rights of a free people;" "The Men of Stafford and Liberty;" "Death to all tyrants;" "The people must and shall rule by their representatives," &c., &c., &c. "The cause for which Hampden died on the field, and Sydney on the scaffold," was omitted on this occasion, as being

not sufficiently exciting; but "Our brave brothers in America!" "Confusion to the Red Coats," and "Down with Lord North," supplied its place, and was cheered with uproarious applause. Then followed Monckton in an elegant barouche, also drawn by four horses, similarly decorated with flags and banners flying, followed by a cavalcade of mingled horse and foot, each decorated plenteously with the colours of the candidates, and profusely scattering their favours among the crowd, which were eagerly seized and worn in triumph.

The pageant, so attended, preceded by a band of music, in which the drum and the trumpet predominated, marched through the town, amid the loudest shouts and acclamations, which were responded to by the groans and hisses of the Tory party; such as dared to appear abroad, or show their heads from the windows above.

The whole town was in a state of feverish excitement, tumult, and disorder. Sheridan occasionally narrated this scene of his first appearance before his proposed constituents with infinite humour.

It was evident to the quick discernment of Sheridan, that, setting on one side the train-band of followers, who had no voice at the poll, the votes were pretty nearly balanced between

the contesting candidates, and probably preponderating on the opposite side of the scale. Results, according to appearances, were equivocal, and it required to be up and doing to ensure a triumph. Sheridan could be prompt, on occasion, and vigorous in action. Seeing how matters stood, as soon as the ceremonies were over, and the banners of his party were being hoisted in front of the Stafford Arms Inn, which had been established as their head-quarters, he took the arm of Monckton, and proceeded to a final canvass of the borough, selecting for his visits the domiciles of the doubtful.

We can now fancy him in his element, chatting with the women, who became enamoured of his easy manners and his fluent flatteries; or toying with the children, whom he praised for their beauty or intelligence—dropping his shillings and sixpences into their laps for toys and sugar-plumbs; then, shaking the rough burgher by the hand, expressing his regret that he could not be favoured by his vote, which he believed would be deposited at the poll on conscientious principles. In all such cases, wherein he had walked within his adversary's lines, he NEVER *asked* for the vote, but invariably regretting that so *honest* a man should, without due consideration of the great

question of popular rights, differ with him in the means by which those rights might be secured.

"You know the principles I have avowed," was his constant remark; "they are for the people, the whole people, and more particularly, the intelligent burghers of this ancient town. No matter whether you give me your vote, or tender it to my opponent, if I am elected I will as warmly advocate your rights as I will those who have given me their suffrage."

"Give us your hand, Sheridan," was the usual response, "my vote is yours."

"You are the best canvasser I ever met with," whispered Monckton, as they passed along.

"Do you think so?"

"Beyond all comparison; you have touched them in the right place, and their hearts are opened."

"Well, we shall see," replied Sheridan, smiling, "to-morrow will show if we shall have opened their mouths."

But he had another ordeal to pass ere the fatigues of that memorable day could be brought to a close.

They had scarcely arrived at head-quarters, when it was announced that a deputation was in waiting of the working men's committee, requesting an audience of the new candidate. "Admit

them," was Sheridan's prompt reply. "Admit them instantly;" and the deputation approached, bowing in the stiffness of a strained formality; in the dignity of men, feeling their own position, who came not to ask, but grant a favour.

"My good friends," said Sheridan, as they approached, shaking each by the hand most cordially, "I am delighted to see you; it affords me the most heartfelt satisfaction, this private meeting with the honest, upright, manly burghers of Stafford, whom I seek to represent in Parliament, in advocacy of those noble principles which animate one and all of you; the distinguishing characteristic of the working classes, who are the bone, the sinew, and sterling wealth of the country."

The burghers listened with attentive gravity to this brief receptive address, rendering to them an importance to which they had not precisely conceived: that they were the bone, the sinew, and wealth of the country was a very palatable piece of intelligence; but seeing that they did not possess either house, or land, or bank, or India stock, or any other representative of wealth, they could not exactly comprehend or believe in the truth of the assertion; a titter ran among them, and a sly question was interjected, which Sheri-

dan, with his usual adroitness, turned nimbly to account.

"Labour, my friends, productive labour, is the only source of wealth, and its product the only real substance. The gold and silver mines of Peru and Mexico are worthless, until the labour of man has wrought out their value; and the land which you cultivate teems not but to the industry and skill of the agriculturist. Labour, then, is wealth, inasmuch as labour is the producer, and stamps its value. I say, then, you are the wealth of the nation. If you sow, and do not reap the harvest of your toil, the wrong is with yourselves, since, by the Bill of Rights, you are free in its enforcement; free in the election of your own representatives in the great councils of the nation; who should be sent there in security of those rights, for which your forefathers bled on the scaffold, and on the field, and by their unyielding patriotism obtained.

"Whom, then, should you send to that House of Representatives as the champion of your rights, the defender of your liberties? Shall it be the nominee of some noble lord, or some wealthy monopolist: who sits in the enjoyment of your productive labours, and uses it as a weapon against yourselves; against the hands which created the power they wield. If ye will it so,

be it so; but then with what right shall ye complain of the burthens which ye bear, being yourselves the forgers of the chains by which ye are bound. Gentlemen, are your homes dear to you? your wives and families, are they dear to you? those sacred ties which bind you to each other, are they dear to you? your liberties, your rights, your privileges, the bonds of your inheritance, which declare your house your castle, your labour free, are they dear to you? If they are, if you feel that spirit within you which animated your fathers in their glorious enterprise, that noble spirit which transmitted to you as your inheritance the freedom which is your own, the freedom of speech, the elective franchise, with all the inviolable rights of the free-born man, be true to yourselves, throw off the yoke which binds you to your inexorable task-masters; dismiss the candidate who shall not be of your own choice, resist corrupt influence, give your vote to the man whose principles are sound, and who shall prove himself the bold and uncompromising advocate of popular rights.

"I am among you, gentlemen, as one identified with yourselves; and I court your suffrage, only as I shall prove myself worthy of your confidence and your support."

This brief address produced an instantaneous effect on the shallow brains of the delegates. It

was not interrupted by loud shouts of applause, but listened to with that marked attention, which is at all times the most unequivocal evidence of the convictions which it carries with it. Sheridan's manner was divested of all guile ; it was candour and sincerity : graceful, yet forcible : while the brilliance of that speaking eye, which gleamed with intelligence, and occasionally flashed in union with the lightning eloquence of the orator, commanded his spell-bound auditor, and moulded him to his will: it seized upon him with a giant's force, and held him the involuntary captive of his mighty mind. The page of the historian may record the passages of his eloquence as they fell from his lips, but they cannot transmit to us one spark of that intellectual fire, which, flowing with the exuberant richness of his inspired flights, won universal admiration, enthusiasm, and applause.

The delegates were dumb-foundered, if we may use the expression, and in their confusion were obliged to fall back upon themselves in consultation as to the course of their proceedings, which had been previously decided upon. At length the spokesman nudged, elbowed, and, thrust forward by his colleagues, approached the candidate with many a stammering hem, and, holding a paper in his hand, which was the text-book,

broke silence, and opened the business of the embassy. He was a fine, burly figure of a man, that spokesman of the *working mens' committee*, a faithful picture of the bone and sinew employed in manufacture; in height about five feet eleven; and not much less, if anything, in circumference; broad in the shoulders, stout in the limbs, an expansive chest, with hands and arms as though they had been modelled from the figure of a Hercules. A giant in strength, but, on a close examination of his rough and honest countenance, a very lamb in Christian meekness and the amenities of a humble life. His name was Grimshaw, Richard Grimshaw, the hammer-and-anvil-man of a country forge; and, ever after this first interview, the friend of Sheridan in all his future campaigns for the borough of Stafford.

"You see, the matter is as this, Mr. Sheridan," he began, after much stammering, and a like amount of hesitation; "you be a stranger among us, and, although you come of a good recommendation—our friend, Mr. Monckton—yet we wishes to judge a little for ourselves before we give our vote. You see, we are a hard-working people, our committee and all; we works for our wages, and we 'arns 'em; we' arnt given to much larnin, cause that arnt in our way, but we know summut notwithstanding; we know there's something wrong

som'were, and we wants to find out its whereabouts, so that we may correct it; and this we can only do by our repursentative in parliment—cause why? our wives and our children want the labour of our hands to keep'em going, and we ha' no time to spend in politics and them things. So you see in course we wants an honest man to repursent us and purtect us in our rights. Already Lord North and his parliment people have taken away, by their taxation, half of our loaf, and we can't stand it, and we wont, so no more about it. We wont pay no more taxes for that 'Merican war with our own brothers, that's what we wont, and that's for certain. We wont wait to shut up shop when our tools are gone; and we wont have the curse upon us that we contributed by our labour to support a savage war with our own brothers in forrin parts, who bravely opposed taxation, by which we at home are so sorely and wickedly oppressed; now that's what we wont do, come what will of it, so this brings us to the pledges which we require you to give if we gives you our votes; and if not, why there's no harm done, and we humbly takes our leave."

"I concur with you with all my heart, in all you have said," returned Sheridan, his countenance glowing with the enthusiasm of the mo-

ment, and the plain, unornamented eloquence of Richard Grimshaw.

The functionary, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, and throwing himself into an oratorical attitude, with a grotesque bow acknowledged the compliment, and prepared himself for the category.

"You see, sir," he began, "at a full meeting of the Working Man's Association, it wur resolved unanimously, wi' the exception o' seven dung worms, who daren't say their souls' their own. Cause why?—cause they arn't got the pluck of a right-down Englishman, and so are afeard of their Tory masters. I says then it wur resolved unanimously to support your election, purwided you show'd yourself a right-down, full-blooded Englishman, an' answered our questions as becomes a English gentleman, wi'out any nonsense or purvarication."

Sheridan good-humouredly nodded his assent to the honest burgher's speech, and the interrogation proceeded.

Article No. 1.—First and foremost, we is opposed to the 'Merican war agin our brothers, as unholy an' unnatural like, an' we wants your 'pinion on that question.

Sheridan.—My opinion entirely concurs with yours on that foul fratricidal war, and I pledge myself to oppose its continuance, with all the

ability I possess, if I am returned to Parliament as your representative.

Grimshaw.—Scrimgeour, write down the answer, which is good.

Article No. 2.—Secondly, we is opposed to Lord North as the enemy of his country, the poor man's oppressor, and the foe of freedom—whurfore we says down wi' Lord North, who plays wi' other men's lives, as we play at football, for amusement—whurfore we says agen, down wi' Lord North.

Sheridan.—I shall oppose the government of Lord North upon principle, and shall never relax in my efforts to displace him.

Grimshaw.—Good agen. Write that down, Scrimgeour, and be sure you put a mark on it.

Article No. 3.—We is opposed to taxation of any sort; but more particularly those as presses on the working man, an' robs him o' the fruits of his labor If so be as they must ha' taxes, let 'em be on such as can afford to pay 'em.

Sheridan.—I shall advocate the strictest economy in the public expenditure; shall give the most decided opposition to war taxes; and shall unflinchingly maintain the right of exemption on the part of the working man. I hold that any tax affecting labour to be a great national evil, and thoroughly concur with you that where taxation is necessary

it should be borne only by those whom your labours have enriched.

Grimshaw.—Mark that, Scrimgeour—our notions to a tittle. Write it down, Scrimgeour, with three cheers for Sheridan, and nine groans for Lord North and the monied aristocracy.

Article No 4.—We goes in for the liberty of conscience and no Popery.

Sheridan.—Liberty of conscience is every man's undoubted right, and its exercise should be firmly and manfully sustained. As to Popery, I avow myself a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and shall strenuously uphold my faith; yielding to every man the same right who may dissent from me in Christian doctrine. Be assured I am no Papist, and that I will never give my vote in any question of religion, but in perfect accordance with that conscience, which you yourselves claim to exercise, as your inherent right.

Grimshaw was puzzled—the answer was equivocal—not right-down straight forward, according to his comprehension; but, with a turn of the head, as he addressed himself to Secretary Scrimgeour, and with a doubtful, hesitating look, he drawled out slowly, "Write down no Papist, no Papist—that is for sartain."

Article No. 5.—We wants a man as will stand

up for the borough of Stafford and its rights; and the rights of the working man; being burghers of the said ancient borough, well known in Parlement; an' whereas, we're willing to work ten hours a day, an' no more; an' we 'sists upon it that Parlement do make ten hours a lawful working day; an' that they do make it a capital felony or misdemeanour in such master or masters as shall not comply with the law, an' pay for extra hours when work requires to be done: so here ends our category.

Sheridan.—The man whom you shall return as your member, is bound, by every tie of interest and duty, to protect the local chartered rights of your ancient borough; for my part, I shall take pride in protecting its sacred institutions, its venerable privileges; nor will I suffer them to be assailed, either by direct or indirect means, to the slightest encroachment on their immunities. The working man is my friend, my warm hearted friend; how then shall I perform my duty to that friend, to whom I owe such serious obligations, if I neglect what is due to him, in the office to which he has elected me by his honest suffrage. Be assured your interests will be ever nearest to my my heart. I applaud your resolution—I applaud your energy—I applaud your patriotism, and am convinced of your mo-

deration in demanding ten hours as the limit of a day's work, when I feel convinced that eight hours a day and no more should ever be exacted of you.

This declaration was received with the most rapturous expressions of joy. "I'll gie him a plumper, by gosh," exclaimed Scrimgeour.

"And I—and I—and all," cried out the delegates.

"Gie us your hand, Muster Sheridan," roared out Grimshaw, "you are one of the right sort, and the man of our choice, so no more about it; the hand of Dick Grimshaw, rough as it is, will never disgrace the man as takes it." Now succeeded the shaking of hands all round, which was concluded in the heartiest manner.

"Before we part, my good friends," said Sheridan, "I wish one word more in your ear, which I am sure you will take in good part. By giving me plumpers, you will deprive yourselves of a vote for another candidate, and which I beg and solicit for our mutual friend Monckton. If you are resolved on securing my election, I am equally desirous of your securing his. He is, as you well know, a sound man and true. Should he be thrown out, it will be like letting the weazel into your poultry yard, or the rat into your meal tub."

"Hurrah! hurrah! Monckton, Monckton for ever!" roared the delegates.

"And now let me claim your attention to another little matter," responded Sheridan, "which will very properly wind up the proceedings of this evening; and the better prepare us for the poll to-morrow: you will find in the dining-hall of the tavern below, that the landlord, in expectation of your company, has provided a table of refreshment for yourselves and such of your friends as you may think proper to associate with you on this occasion. Go, my friends, go, and in your bumpers don't forget the cause of liberty, the purity of election, and the glory of old England."

This was a most glorious annunciation, received with unbounded cheers; and the parties retired in evident good humour with themselves, and with everybody around them; while Sheridan, partially overcome by the business of the day, sunk into the nearest seat, and revived under the influence of his favourite claret.

Huge legs of corned pork, with mountains of peas pudding, monstrous legs of mutton, with piled dishes of turnips, and tureens of unwieldy size filled with the favourite tripe and onions, speedily disappeared before the hammer-and-anvil-men, who washed down the heavy load which

each man carried according to his capacity, with copious draughts of the ripe old Staffordshire ale.

The toast was not needed to the ale, but the ale was ever ready in responding to the toast. The hogshead, which had been tapped in the dining-room, held out to the last, but many a head went swimming away in its glorious confusion of intellect and ideas; and found itself when the poll opened, but little refreshed or warmed up to the enthusiasm of the preceding evening.

"It was a glorious day, a great and glorious day," said Sheridan, in one of his occasional reminiscences, "we had a hard fight for it; the enemy was strong, and could only be encountered by superior generalship; the hard hands had harder heads; and could only be softened down by copious libations of strong ale."

But the battle had to be fought, on the ground appointed for its action, in front of the town hall, where a large and capacious hustings had been prepared for the reception of the candidates; the sheriff being the presiding officer of the day, and the poll clerks. The Tory party had not been behind hand with their adversaries in their preparations for the contest. They had armed a strong band of sturdy bludgeon men to protect their voters in their approaches to the hustings.

Dick Grimshaw, ever up and ready, was on the spot, and his burly form was seen leading on his followers to the station which he himself had assigned for them; it was occupied, but Grimshaw, nothing daunted, fought his way forward, and a skirmish ensued, a few broken heads followed, the sheriff interposed; but Grimshaw gained his position; hawling down the colours of the bludgeon men, and hoisting the blues.

The candidates, as they respectively appeared upon the hustings, were loudly greeted with the hurrahs of their adherents, amid the hootings, screechings, groans, and howlings of their opponents. In vain the sheriff entreated order, the yelling continued in mingled roars, and it must be confessed the blues, in point of numbers and the strength of lungs, were thunderingly in the ascendant.

The candidates successively stood forward to address the meeting; lips were seen moving, hands and arms in eloquent action, but not a word could be heard in the tumultuous roarings of the multitude. The nominations were made, and the question was put by the sheriff to a show of hands; all was excitement, the blues had it by an overwhelming majority; a poll was demanded, and the poll books were forthwith opened. Now came the earnest struggle, the hopes, the fears,

the heart-throbbings of the contestants, as the progress of the election was occasionally declared. The Tory party mustered in their strength, and, on the closing of that the first day's poll, stood in a clear majority of sixty-seven.

"No matter," said Grimshaw, cheeringly, "the fire will slacken down I warrant ye when the powder is expended."

The next day the polling commenced, and continued to the close with unabated spirit, when it appeared that the blues had gained a little of their lost ground. That, however, and the day following, and up to the last hour or two when it was to finally close the hopes of the Tory candidates, were fully sustained, and the sanguine temperament of Sheridan and his colleague was subdued down to a freezing point. The clock struck two, the Tory candidates were forty-nine a head, and in two hours the election would be declared, and the successful candidates returned by the sheriff as returning officer. It was a moment of the highest excitement, of flushed confidence on the one hand, and not a very flattering prospect on the other. Sheridan displayed his usual equanimity, while, on his own admission, he feared the game was up. Where was Grimshaw? he had not been seen upon the ground; had he deserted his colours? the eye was stretched far

and wide over the dense masses, but no Grimshaw. The sheriff smiled to the question of "Where is Grimshaw, with his working men?" At length there was seen to be an uneasy sensation among the dense multitude waving about under a heavy pressure from behind. The sound of the big drum was heard at a distance, and all was motion, when the burly form of Grimshaw appeared leading on his stalwart band, with a huge hedge stake in his hand, colors flying, and cheered by the deafening shouts of the assembled people. The scale was turning; onward they marched in close order, the throng giving way on every side to give them ready access to the hustings.

"Grimshaw is a safe pilot," whispered the sheriff, whose leaning was to the cause of the Whigs. "A safe shrewd man, Mr. Sheridan; a good man and true."

Three o'clock Sheridan and Monckton stood at the head of the poll, twenty-three; the announcement was hailed with an appalling roar—the waving of handkerchiefs from the adjacent houses, from the lady politicians, who, until this moment, had not shewn themselves at the windows. The bludgeon men had all their work to do in suppressing the aggressions of the mob on the Tory party, who had the temerity of appearing among them, and of conducting to the hustings the few straggling votes that remained unpolled.

Description fails in picturing the frightful scene, wherein the fiercest passions are aroused in stern contention. The fights were numerous, and scattering over the entire ground; in every quarter broken heads were seen, and the vanquished borne away from the ground, with little to console themselves in the folly of their daring.

Grimshaw's working men were polling away, and the clock, striking four, terminated a contest which had been conducted from the first with more than usual fierceness and ferocity.

In due course, the sheriff advanced to the front of the hustings, and announced the election of Monckton and Sheridan as the representatives of the borough of Stafford in parliament. The bludgeon-men tore off their colours, and, concealing their staves, retired; the unsuccessful candidates took to their carriages, while those of Sheridan and Monckton were unhorsed, and they were borne in triumph to their head-quarters, the Stafford Arms. On arriving there, the first thing Sheridan did was to call for pen and ink, and write to Mrs. Sheridan the following note:—

"My dearest Elizabeth,

"If anything can compensate me for the loss of your presence, it is in the knowledge of your

exulting in my election for the borough of Stafford. To-morrow I am to be chaired, and the next day I am with you.

"Your own,

"RICHARD."

On that night, not a favour was to be seen in Stafford but those worn by the blues; not a banner was to be seen but those which spoke to the passions of the people, and which had aroused them to the wildest excitement. The madness of the many for the gain of the few was never more manifest; it was the triumph of political fanaticism over reason. Grimshaw, who had studied his measures well, who had masked his batteries with effect, so as to deceive the adversary, and allure him into ambush, won the honours of the day, and was accorded foremost in the rank of political championship—the veteran who could not be beat in electioneering science.

Bonfires were blazing, alehouse doors were thrown open, hogsheads were emptied in celebration of the "so great victory." Dick Grimshaw presided at a substantial table provided for the gallant operatives; but at whose expense no one knew, and no one cared to enquire. The night closed in, and the day dawned to a new exhibition, in the preparation for the accustomed chair-

ing, and the frantic orgies of a bacchanalian festival.

The ceremonial concluded; the speeches of those who delighted in their occasional displays of oratory being duly delivered, the substantial dinners, which had been amply provided and adapted to the peculiar tastes of the distinct classes of the burghers, joyously discussed; the town was once more suffered to sink into its natural somnolency; and Sheridan returned to London on the following morning to receive the congratulations of his friends, and to prepare himself for that nobler field of action to which he had aspired, and which, by the resistless force of his natural genius and his amenities, he had attained.

If we can be permitted to fall back upon the page of history, recording the illustrious names distinguished as members of the Commons House of Parliament in the year 1780, when Sheridan took his seat, we shall find that the close borough system which then prevailed, and so loudly denounced, was not altogether inimical to the best interests of the nation, or framed to the exclusion of commanding talent, and enlightened patriotism, from participation in its councils. At no period of parliamentary history can we find so splendid an array of talent on its benches, or a

more forcible expression of public sentiment, in debate, than when a Pitt was the leader of the high Tory party, and the genuine patriotism of a Fox displayed itself in the glowing advocacy of a people's rights ; nor was the eloquence in debate confined to these two great parallel leaders of party, but diffused throughout the ranks of their disciples. The close borough system, whatever may be its relative evils, gave to the Tory minister his strength, and to the Whig leader his power, of calling forth youthful energy, in its early aspirations, to aid that cause which was of the people. The system on which each party relied, as the test of its strength, was pretty equally balanced, while the open boroughs and county members held themselves in reserve, as unpledged to party ; to give the casting vote on great public questions of State policy; governed chiefly by their own influences on the matter under debate, with a decided leaning to the minister of the day.

The state of the times was one of perilous anxiety ; the throbbings of the democratic pulse being manifest in the commercial cities and manufacturing towns—the seeds sown in America, having crossed the Atlantic and become rooted in the soil into which they had fallen. The melancholy failures of the British arms in America,

the open hostility of France fraternizing with the colonists, and sending out her armies to sustain them in their revolt, the disaffection of Holland uniting in the same cause, had damaged our commerce, depressed our manufactures, and deranged the national credit; while taxation was creeping into the domiciles of an otherwise oppressed people, fed the flame which could only be smothered down by a paid constabulary and an augmented military force, but could not be subdued, or even partially extinguished.

Lord North, who, from his distinguished position as Prime Minister, had fallen under the general odium of the people, was burnt in effigy in several of the great manufacturing districts; and even the venerated King George, the most popular monarch that ever reigned on the throne of England, was reproached by disloyalty, and his crown threatened by republicanism. Such was the state of the times when Sheridan entered the political arena.

Nor was the great question of the American War that which alone agitated the public mind. Another arose of an equally serious character, which for a time diverted the current setting in against the administration of the obnoxious premier. The Roman Catholics of Ireland, assisted by those of England, seized upon the

embarrassments of the state, as an available time when they might obtain a resumption of power, by the removal of those disabilities, under which they had so long laboured by oppressive laws. They petitioned Parliament for their emancipation, from the thraldom which they had so long endured; and it was considered in the progressive march of liberal opinion, that the times were most favourable to their cause. Fox and Burke were their champions; but the administration of Lord North was firm and inflexible in its resistance, being backed by the King himself, who, it was well known, would not yield in the slightest degree to the demands of the Romish church.

Lord North was endured, under these circumstances; and the popularity of the King revived, by his inflexible adherence to the constitutional union of Church and State.

The rebellion of 1745, the invasion of Charles Stuart, the Pretender; whose predatory march through the northern counties was still in memory; while its traces were yet visible in the ruin which it wrought; these evidences were appealed to by the grey-headed survivor of those perilous days, as he related with aggravated horrors, the events of the rebellion to his children, and excited them to fanatic frenzy, in resistance of papal freedom.

Concessions had been made in a former Parliament to the laymen of the Church of Rome: concessions, improving their condition in releasement of certain liabilities, but which ceded nothing in political power; it was the impolicy of the Irish agitators, who had gained this first step to precipitately urge forward higher claims; presuming on their own strength; and calculating on the entanglement of the Government, in the great struggle of American independence: and it was mainly apprehended, that Parliament, in its presumed weakness, would succumb to demands, jeopardising the established church, and the constitution itself. Misgoverned by the promoters of this Catholic movement, and misled in their dreams of the security of their cause, in the presumed weakness of the resisting power: the advocates of emancipation assumed the highest tone—a threatening attitude—with the appearance of a civil war looming in the distance:—by placing themselves in this formidable but false position; untenable under any circumstances; as opposed to lusty population, defended by the doctrines of a Calvin and a Luther, and armed with the stern conviction of bigots to their faith; the Romanists lost the ground, which, with more of moderation, they might have maintained: and thus aroused and inflamed the fiercest passions of their oppo-

nents. Petitions to Parliament were preparing in every direction against the coming Session, and the fire spread wide and afar, and was only ultimately subdued by that fatal outbreak in the metropolis on the second day of June, in the memorable 1780, and the acting of that frightful tragedy commemorated as the Lord George Gordon riots.

Such was the state of the times when Sheridan assumed his seat in the Commons House: when that House was ruled by an obnoxious Minister: when the Opposition, or Whig members, were not in the full enjoyment of public confidence, and even royalty was at a discount. It was a period when the country was in a transition state; and the old institutions were to crumble under the doctrines of a new philosophy, yielding their remains to the onward march of progress. Whether that progress which had ruled down the wisdom and patriotism of successive ages is for the public weal has yet to be decided, as well as the questionable stability of an unarmed Government, seeking to rule not by the bayonet but by the affections and sympathies of an united people; progress is not always improvement; and unless such a state of things can be brought to exist, progress may defeat the purpose at which it aims, and uproot that liberty which has been the growth of centuries.

Sheridan took the oaths prescribed by law, and his seat on the first day of the session of the new Parliament, and became constant in his attendance as a student—a silent observer of its forms—and the conduct of debate; thus qualifying himself to enter the arena in the display of those powers, which he felt he could hold at command, and bring into action when occasion required. Although seated on the Opposition benches by the side of its great Whig leader, Charles James Fox, he felt his own independence—that he was not the nominee of a close borough, but the representative of a free community—manufacturing and industrial!—jealous of their chartered rights, and inflexibly opposed to despotic rule. He felt that he was not bound to the party, with which he had allied to the rendition of his vote, but in accordance with his own judgment and the approval of his own conscience. He was a Whig, essentially Whig—liberal and enlightened—but he had not assured himself, that with all the endowments of mind, and the burning eloquence of patriotism, so eminently distinguishing its great leader, Fox, the party was perfectly sound and infallible in its doctrines. "I felt," said Sheridan, "in all that I saw about me, that there was *too much* of party spirit, and *too little* of country in the conduct of debate.

But he assiduously applied himself to the consideration of the great and absorbing questions to be brought before the House; and to familiarise himself with the subjects to be rendered to discussion. He was not slow in discovering the difference between addressing the mixed assembly of the people; in appealing to their passions and their prejudices; and that of rising before educated men and veteran senators, with whom politics and the science of government had been the study of a lifetime. In his vocabulary there was no such word as fail; and in his superior caution no such word as risk in his encounterings. He knew his powers, and he employed them, subjecting them however to a thorough training, before he brought them into action; but with all this, which would appear to imply a boldness of confidence, approaching to arrogance, he was singularly modest, affable, and unassuming. It was the mind! the mind within itself, working and improving, seeking and attaining, bent on the expression of its own energies, without ostentation, or the overshadowings of vanity.

He sat in the House, watching and admiring; cultivating new associations; rising to no question; but dropping a silent vote: preparing for that giant strength which he afterwards displayed—to the surprise and admiration of the most brilliant

orators that had ever occupied the benches of a House of Parliament.

A petition had been presented to the House against the election of Sheridan and Monckton, by some disappointed voters of Stafford; charging them with bribery and corruption—high crimes and misdemeanours, disqualifying them, if proved, to sit as members of that *immaculate* house! among whom ranged the *virtuous* representatives of those *untainted* seminaries for the cultivation of aspiring politicians, vulgarly yclept close, or rotten boroughs; where suffrages were openly offered to the highest bidder, as household goods are sold under the hammer of the auctioneer.

The petition being read on the 20th day of November, called Sheridan to his feet, and the delivery of his first or maiden speech—a speech which could possess but little interest; being purely of a defensive character, and affording little or no opportunity of judging the qualifications of the speaker; confined as it was to the one subject, and seeking no ornamental aid to set it off.

Having briefly adverted to the petition itself; the manner in which it had been dressed up; and the groundless charges it contained: he complained—"That it was in the power of any petitioner in the pursuit of his invidious pur-

poses, and without the shadow of pretence, to bring a charge of crime and misdemeanour against any member of that honorable house with impunity. There is no law to prevent him, and no law affixing on him a penalty for the scandalous breach of the powers with which he is invested, and has so wantonly violated.

"When it is alleged that an election is undue on account of informality, or upon certain points of law and custom, the character and feelings of the member against whom the petition is brought receive no hurt But the case is otherwise when an accusation is brought of bribery and corruption—crimes so weighty in the eye of the law, and the constitution of the country. There is no law to prevent it, and no law inflicting the penalties due to its scandalous abuse. I earnestly hope then, that some gentlemen of greater experience in parliamentary usage, and of more consequence than myself, with a view to the honour and dignity of this house, will devise some mode of preventing frivolous and malicious petitions; and of punishing their authors suitably to the nature of the offence; without violating the right of petition, on just grounds, and conscientiously pursued.

"It was very hard that a gentleman should lie under the imputation of crimes of which he was

innocent, for a whole year, nay, probably for a longer period, while the question is pending and under examination, and then have no remedy on acquittal, for the wrongs he has endured.

"But," he continued, "I conceive that under such circumstances, every member who has been fairly and independently elected, must feel equally for the credit of his constituents, from whom he has derived his trust; whose character as well as interest it is his duty to defend.

"It is certainly a most serious hardship, that upon the accusation of a few of the lowest and most unprincipled voters in any borough, a numerous and respectable body should remain traduced and stigmatized in the eyes of this house, for an indefinite space of time, on a petition which should at last be proved a gross and groundless libel. I therefore repeat the expression of my hope, that some gentleman of more experience than myself, will turn his thoughts towards providing some just and adequate remedy for this evil; and some exemplary penalties, whenever charges of so gross a nature was preferred on frivolous grounds, and for unfair purposes."

It may be fairly inferred that the novelty of his position, and the celebrity he had acquired by his dramatic productions, obtained

for him that deep and marked attention which followed him through the whole of this address. The House continued in perfect silence to the end, a rather uncommon occurrence, excepting on those occasions of great public interest, when the floor is occupied by the commanding eloquence of the great leaders in debate.

Rigby, the veteran member; nursed and reared in the fœtid atmosphere of a public life; well versed in the arcana of politics, and familiar with borough-mongering in all its branches, rose in reply, with his usual bitterness of sarcasm, to wither the bud that was breaking forth in its own development.

He began with *seriously* acknowledging the force of the honourable gentleman's arguments. He said it was true, it was a hardship; he owned that the honourable gentleman had spoken *feelingly* on the subject, and he doubted not with good reason. He then sarcastically observed—he had not recollected at first that the honourable member was *one* of the members petitioned against; and that the petition *charged him* with bribery! Hard as the case was, and deeply as the gentleman felt for *himself* and his *constituents*, the *virtuous electors* of Staffordshire, he could only pity both the one and the other. Alas! Poor Stafford must remain

condemned, and suffer under the odium of being bribed, till the petition could be heard. He did not *doubt* the honourable gentleman had been ill-used: for of course it must be presumed that he had a *natural connexion* with the borough for which he had taken his seat. He *had lived many years there*, and was *perfectly* acquainted with his *constituents*. The case was certainly a hard one, but time only could cure the evil; it lay not, as the honorable gentleman well knew, in the breasts of the committees, they could only report on the facts as they came out before them, and it was on their report the business of the house to proceed.

The drift of Mr. Rigby's remarks is too clearly manifest to be misunderstood; he had no faith in the integrity of borough constituency; he had been too immediately associated with the members of the *trade*, and could fix the price of a seat, varying according to the circumstances of the case, and the numerical strength of the voters. The abuses of Parliament were too notorious to be defended by any argument however specious; and the idea of any member obtaining his seat, even for an open borough upon independent principles; and without those *secret* aids coming properly under the bribery and corruption act; too ridiculous to be enter-

tained. Still it is believed that Sheridan had obtained his seat, more by the party spirit he had excited; the suavity of his manners; the vigour of his addresses; and the influences of his name; than by those more substantial, but crooked means, to which his purse was not equal.

Charles James Fox rose in reply to Rigby, in support of his friend; but was called to order by the Speaker, who said there was no question before the House, and the matter dropped.

Moore, in his biography, says that Sheridan in the course of the evening went to his friend Woodfall, the reporter, in the gallery, to obtain his opinion of this his first venture in debate, and that Woodfall shook his head in doubt, adding, "You have mistaken your forte," on which Sheridan after a slight pause replied with some force, "It is in me, and it must come out." This may in all probability have been the buzz of the day, the hearsay whisperings of political gossip, but we doubt its truth as inconsistent with the character of the two great men to whom it referred. There was nothing in the short speech of Sheridan, on which to found an opinion of those vast powers which had yet to be called into requisition: the subject afforded no ornament, and little of amplification, it was limited to a very narrow compass—simply to a defence

of his own position. It was not necessary, probably, in a House so constituted; and we doubt its policy; but it was breaking ground, and its end was answered. Nor was Woodfall, the sagacious Woodfall, likely to commit himself in an opinion upon such slender grounds.

CHAPTER XI.

MANAGER OF DRURY LANE AND ITALIAN OPERA—FOZARD AND THE LETTER BAG —BENEVOLENCE—KELLY ACTING MANAGER, AND ITALIAN VOCALISTS—MORELAND AND CO. ADVANCE THREE THOUSAND POUNDS—KELLY ARRESTED AT BIRMINGHAM — HENDERSON DISCHARGES HIM OUT OF CUSTODY, AND LOANS SHERIDAN TWO HUNDRED POUNDS.

The quality of the mind is scarcely to be judged but in connection with the times in which it developes its properties and powers. The condition of society; its morals, its manners, and its customs, unite their influences in the formation of character; and mould the ductile mind to its own seductive fashion. Man is, therefore, at best, but the mere creature of circumstances, warmed into life and action by the currents into which fortune has cast him; the mind taking its bent from the influences by which it is irresistibly governed.

Sheridan, as the manager of a theatre and an able dramatist, was no longer the Sheridan of his early days. In his early associations, when his aspirings were clouded by the apathy of those, who should have been best acquainted with his genius; and so lent a cheerful hand to its cultivation;—struggling along alone, and unguided,

elevating himself from obscurity by his conversational powers; by which he won his way into the polite circles of aristocratic Bath, and sustaining himself by the elegance of his address and the fascination of his wit; under such circumstances, we can hardly wonder at his indulgence in those slight excesses, which prevailed with the young men of leisure of his own day; basking in the lap of fortune and intermingling with fashion, partaking at once of its follies and its vices. Sheridan, in his youth, left alone to his own resources; with no clearly defined object, in which to advance himself in the formation of his future: flying from the exercise of a pen, but slenderly encouraged; took refuge in those haunts of fashion, where the gay mingled with the gay, where his wit was acknowledged, and his society prized. Habits, once formed and long indulged in, are seldom renounced unless by necessity, or a removal from the region wherein they could be indulged; it was in the idleness of youth, in the dull monotony of a life led on without excitement or any incentive to action, that he laid the foundation of those habits which became inseperable from his nature; and continued with his days, assuming a new form in its several stages; but still distending its branches from the same perceptible root.

But as the proprietor and manager of Drury Lane, the most distinguished theatre in London, giving the tone to every stage in the United Kingdom—as the unrivalled dramatist, whose *School for Scandal* had charmed the listening thousands, who had been attracted to its performance, with his opera of *The Duenna*, *The Rivals*, and *The Critic*, each in themselves masterpieces of dramatic composition; we repeat, that Sheridan, the manager and dramatic writer, was not the Sheridan of his own youthul days; or rather, that in the development of his properties of mind he exhibited very little, if any, of the characteristics of his youth. No longer the wanderer seeking pleasure where he could find it; in its bacchanalian temples with their saturnalia of dissipation, he found it in his home with the wife he still adored, and the luxuriance of a table most extravagantly supplied. His home was the little temple to which he dedicated his labours, and if we closely examine them in the product, we can scarcely charge him with indolence, although he himself submitted to the plea. The truth is, that indolence could only be ascribable to the exercise of his pen. The world resounded with his praises for what he had done, and remained intently expectant of what he could or would do; while Sheridan, conscious that he had

arrived at the topmost pinnacle of that fair fame which he had acquired, which could only be sustained by further efforts, but not advanced; languished in the apprehension that in the feverish state of public excitement it might be imperilled. In giving, therefore, a new turn to his commanding genius, and applying himself to politics, he furnished a still stronger evidence of that indomitable mind, which, grasping at the means of its exhibition, could not be restrained in its ardour, or the copiousness of its resources. If we consider him in the exercise of his boundless hospitality, in the extensive routine of his visitings, sought as a guest at all the fashionable parties of the day, luxuriating in the hot-bed of dissipation, to which it is to be regretted his taste too much inclined; then again, the political clubs, of which he became a leading member, his theatrical management of the two great theatres, Drury Lane and the Italian Opera House, both of them held in proprietorship, and then the necessary study of the art of government qualifying him as a member of the House of Commons, to speak on the great and absorbing questions then agitating the public mind, we are lost in amazement at his diversified powers, and not less so at that division of time by which he could accomplish so much in the pursuit of his plea-

sures and the prosecution of his labours; the one at such a heavy charge upon his pecuniary resources, and the other at such a precarious amount of pecuniary gain.

It is to be lamented that Sheridan was so little influenced by discretion, and so lamentably deficient in all matters of accounts; but it is equally remarkable that up to the time when he obtained all the privileges of parliament, together with personal protection against indebtedness, that he so managed his extravagant expenditures, and the employment of his fluctuating means, that he never lost the confidence of creditors or incurred the liabilities contingent on pecuniary defaults. His management in these matters was the more singular since it was not the consequence of calculation, or resulting from the calculation of ways and means, but from his indifference to money, which he estimated at no higher value than at the pleasures which it could readily produce, and hence was as freely parted with. The receipt of funds at any time was but a prelude to its immediate dispersion. The first claimant that made his appearance was always sure to carry away the contents of his little treasury, and this fact was so well known to his several tradesmen, that they endured with patience and abided their

time when the purse might be replenished, or his drafts upon the theatres were likely to be honoured.

Sheridan was never known to retain in his possession beyond a few hours, any of the funds that had fallen into his hands. A singular anecdote is related of him in evidence of this fact, and of his total indifference to what was necessary to his own wants, even in petty expenditures.

Fozard, the livery-stable keeper, then residing in Park-lane, being extremely pressed for the payment of his duties, waited on Sheridan, and met him at the moment he was leaving his house. It was a fortunate accident, for Sheridan was not at all times accessible, and Fozard had made many fruitless efforts at meeting him; always assured that could he do so he should attain his object, which was the payment of his bill. Approaching him as he was descending the steps in front of his own door, Fozard addressed him, "This is a most fortunate meeting, Mr. Sheridan." "Rather say unfortunate," returned Sheridan, interrupting him, "if you want money; for it is just as painful to me to refuse, as it will be disagreeable to you to hear. I have no money, and I suppose I have overdrawn Peake, since I wrote to him yesterday for a remittance, and have received no answer."

"Pardon me, Mr. Sheridan," returned the

other, "but there must be a mistake some where; for Mr. Peake assured me, when I met him this morning, that he had enclosed you one hundred and fifty pounds immediately after the receipt of your note; and I did hope that you would have considered me in my extremely unpleasant predicament."

"Nonsense, sir! nonsense! Peake has told you an untruth; I have not been to the theatre for these last ten days, and have written to him three times, directing him to remit, which he has failed to do; but I suppose (with a smile) that he had reasons for a non compliance."

"This is very strange," returned Fozard, gravely; "very and exceedingly reprehensible conduct, for I cannot doubt your word, and I really have hitherto given great credit to Peake's veracity."

"And so have I, and so I do," responded Sheridan, good-humouredly, "for Peake's an honest servant and a truthful man; the error is your's, you must have mistaken his answer."

"Impossible!" returned Fozard; "it was distinct; and Dunn, who was with him at the time, said that he himself had delivered the letter at your house yesterday morning at one o'clock, you at the time not being visible."

"Well, then, it must be so," said Sheridan,

somewhat bewildered, "it must be so; but there must be some unaccountable negligence among my people."

"Have you looked over your letters this morning?"

"Faith, I believe not," was the reply; on which they returned into the house, and Sheridan proceeded to examine the contents of a bag, discharging a most voluminous correspondence, which had been suffered to accumulate in the receptacle to which it had been assigned.

Three letters from Peake, each with an enclosure, were turned out of the aforesaid bag, the last with a remonstrance that for a short time Sheridan would be more chary in his demands, leaving some hope to the actor of receiving his salary.

The product of the three letters was three hundred and fifty pounds, Fozard's demand three hundred and forty-eight.

"Lucky, lucky dog!" said Sheridan, handing over the whole amount to his creditor, without giving the least consideration to other demands equally pressing. "Lucky dog, Fozard; you've hit it this time." Fozard with many bows and many thanks handed over a receipt and the balance of two pounds, which Sheridan deposited

in an empty purse, equally satisfied with his friend Fozard, The business being closed, they left the house together, each on his separate mission; but on passing into the street Sheridan was stopt by a brawny Irishwoman, miserably clad, with a child in her arms, and another by her side, the very personification of human misery and wretchedness.

"An shure it is yourself, Mr Sheridan; an blessings on you an the likes o' you—the widdy's an the orphan's frind. An I said to myself as I cam the way, if I can but get the eye o' him, as is the glory o' auld Ireland, it will be a blessin and a male fur the childer."

"Well, well," replied Sheridan, interrupting her in her harangue with the greatest good nature; "what is it, my good woman—what can I do for you?"

Fozard, who related the fact, hung back to hear the result of the meeting, having heard much of the importunities with which he was pestered when he was seen abroad, and well knowing the benevolent nature of the man.

"An the blessin' o' God be with you," returned the woman, "an' on you and yours to the end o' time; an' it will be with you, an' it will hang over you, in the full glory of the blessed Virgin, who nurtured from her own breast the

Son of God, fur shure the likes of you there is not, an' more the pity, Mister Sheridan, more the pity, for then the famishin' widder, wi' her childer, wud be more cared for, an' have work to do, an' pay for the bit crust an' the pratey she eats an' divides wi' her poor babes, out o' her own earnings. But the likes o' that is not for us, an' we must e'en get it o' the hands o' charity."

Sheridan listened to her wailing while fumbling for his purse with the utmost placidity; at length, when her eloquence began to abate, he threw in an enquiry.

"Is it where we live, Mr. Sheridan? ah! surely it is where we starve, in a cellar where the blessed light never peeps in on our miseries, an' the day and the night are all the same, an' my husband died there in that same, an' the ground covers him, God rest his soul, an' I am left alone in the world with three childer, heaven presarve me, without a friend to help me, save and except your honour's honour, who will not see the widder perish or her famished childer death stricken by her side. It was the mercy o' providence that brought me here to pray for you and yours; an' it guided me like the star that shone over Bethlehem."

"There, there, say no more, my good

woman," was Sheridan's hasty reply, whose patience was exhausted, and placing the contents of his purse into her hands, which he returned, emptied of its contents, to his pocket, he attempted to pass away but was restrained by his inexorable tormentor; who, grasping him by the sleeve, held him to the endurance of a torrent of blessings on him and his, poured forth with a volubility equalled only by her opening appeal.

"May the saints presarve ye an' watch over ye by night an' by day, an' comfort ye in sickness an' in sorrow. Goold! an' is it goold and siller? faith an' it is! and may the Lord reward ye an' pour down his blessings upon ye, as he did the manna in the wilderness to the comfort of the holy one. May the Holy virgin be with you and continue with you; an' she is with you in the spirit, for it is said, he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord. Aye! an' well shall ye be repaid by the Lord which is in heaven, and by the smile of the holy virgin, who shall gi' you a smile and a welcome to a seat on the throne where mercy scattereth her alms."

"Go, woman, go; get away with you, you are mad," cried Sheridan hurriedly, and escaping her grasp hastened his step, while her voice was still heard pouring forth in full Irish accent and

Irish volubility, until dying away as he receded it became lost in the distance.

"I followed him," said Fozard, from whom we derived the anecdote already narrated, "somewhat surprised at the adventure, and the strange fact of his parting with all the cash he had in his possession to the application of a beggar woman; when a much smaller sum would have sufficed for her necessities. Imprudent as I knew he was in the management of his money matters, this was a degree of imprudence almost bordering on insanity, involving a degree of thoughtlessness actually rendering him incapable of the conduct of his own affairs; so I thought at the time, and still think, because in this simple affair I could not but discover the weakness which extended itself through all his monetary matters, and led to that ultimate confusion in his affairs by which he never actually knew his own position, while from petty embarrassments he left the impression abroad that he was involved in inextricable difficulties.

"I overtook him at the corner of Clarges-street and Piccadilly, waiting for a hackney coach which was drawing up to the side walk to receive him. I accosted him with 'My dear sir, you must pardon me for the rudeness of remark, and the

indelicacy of alluding to the state of your purse, but I see you have called a hack, and I much question whether you have left yourself enough to pay for its hire.'"

"Egad, that's true," he replied, fumbling about in his pocket for the desired means. "I'faith you are right, Fozard, it's true. I never thought of that."

"While every one must commend your charitable disposition, Mr. Sheridan, I am bound to express my regret that you should have lavished upon one object of your philanthropy a sum sufficient, if equally dispensed, to have allayed the wants of at least twenty in the same state of suffering."

"True, true, Fozard," he returned, "I might have walked the streets and spent my day in giving to the twenty you have alluded to, a supper and a bed, and no other good would have come of it, for the morrow would have discovered them in the same wretched condition as the last, with the same wants to be satisfied, and by the same means. Now, I have saved my time," he said jocularly, "and I hope the poor creature and her children will profit by it."

"But in this matter, sir, you have been so wholly unmindful of self, that I cannot help re-

calling to your memory the quaint old saying of 'Charity begins at home.'"

"Cant, Fozard, cant, the humbug of penury in husbanding its thrift. Charity at home never yet stirred the kitchen fire, nor kept the pot boiling, while abroad it does both, and cheers the heart, while it allays the bitter wants of hunger."

"This was said with a heartiness calling forth a responsive smile, but I could not part with him thus," added Fozard, "and it was the singular characteristic of this good-natured man, that be would listen to reproof, if courteously administered, whithout the least sign of disapproval or personal superiority."

"One word more, Mr. Sheridan, and I have done; may not your charitable intentions be frustrated by the object on which it is bestowed, aiding intemperance rather than abating misery."

"Possible, Fozard; but you know he who sows is not sure of his harvest, and it would be a shallow plea of the husbandman to fail in his obligation on that account; the hand that scatters is not amenable for the ground on which his seeds fall, or the unproductive seasons which defeat his labours. But I have sown wisely, and have already reaped the harvest," he added,

laughing immoderately at the thought passing through his brain.

"I was completely at fault; I could not comprehend his meaning—"reaped the harvest?" I inquired.

"Yes, my boy! and a glorious one too, an enduring harvest. A stream of blessings on me and mine, flowing from a fountain which appeared to be inexhaustible, together with a clear absolution of all former sins and backslidings; a clear quittance, and as sound a title to heaven as though it had been signed, and sealed, and delivered by the Pope himself, with the whole bench of Cardinals for attesting witnesses."

The sarcastic humour with which he delivered himself elicited from Fozard a responsive laugh, which he had ineffectually attempted to restrain: being rather more inclined to reprove than commend the thoughtlessness, with which he had parted with the last coin in his pocket. As Sheridan, who by this time had seated himself in the coach, was about to drive off, Fozard called to him, tendering a supply, and reminding him of the hack fare. "We shall do," he responded, "we shall pick it up by the way," and the carriage bowled along, leaving Fozard fixed in his gaze on the vehicle, whirling away with the singular man, whose only deficiency in knowledge

was the art of taking care of himself in the management of his purse.

Of Sheridan's peculiar tact in obtaining even the largest sums on occasions of emergency, we have an amusing anecdote related by Michael Kelly, the composer, who had been engaged as the managing director of the Italian Opera House, in the Haymarket, Sheridan being the proprietor. It appearing that he had been a little too lavish in his drafts on the treasury of that establishment; on the arrival of the weekly pay day, there were no assets to meet the demands of the Italian vocalists, who, be it known, are the most obdurate of all creditors; while at the same time they are the most arrogant and rapacious. Kelly, who well knew the parties he had to deal with, met them on the Saturday morning rehearsal with the disagreeable tidings that no salaries would be paid on that day, and appointing the following Tuesday as the day of consummation; but the *corps Italienne* felt little inclined to relax their claims to immediate settlement; they murmured in discordant whispers their dissent to the proposition, and in vain Kelly's pleadings to assuage their rising wrath, rose at once into open rebellion; declaring one and all that they would not appear in the performance of that evening, unless their salaries were paid; that by

non-payment the manager had violated the articles of their engagement, and that they should throw themselves upon the public, &c., with such like arguments commonly used by our foreign artists.

Kelly made the most of it, and to threats returned threats, declaring that if they were not at the theatre at the accustomed hour in discharge of their duty, he would inflict the full penalty on every absentee, and also make his appeal to the public, whose servants they were; but the Italians, nothing daunted by this avowal, pertinaciously persisted in their previous declaration, reasserting their rights, adding at the same time their intention of attending in the evening, but concluding with *no pay no play;* upon these terms the parties separated.

Kelly, very much perplexed, and deeming the case hopeless in the uncertainty of meeting with Sheridan, and the still greater uncertainty of deriving from him the funds required, bethought him as a last resource to apply to the bankers, Messrs. Moreland and Co., of Pall Mall. No time was to be lost, and with hurried steps he entered the sanctum of that highly respectable monetary establishment. His reception was courteous, but his request not less promptly than decidedly negatived; with the addition that, not to save the Opera House or Sheridan himself,

would they advance one shilling more on any account whatever. With this rebuff, Kelly retired perfectly dismayed. It was now one o'clock, and all that remained to be done was to see Sheridan, if possible, and communicate to him the true state of affairs. Sheridan had not risen; Kelly was desired to wait; time flew, and Kelly's impatience increased. At length, after an hour's waiting, Sheridan made his appearance, and listened to the communication with the greatest composure.

"Three thousand ducats, pounds I mean, or the Jew will have his pound of flesh, is it not so, Kelly?" was the reply. "Well, what is to be done? for something, as you say, must be done to feed these Italian cormorants."

"Exactly so"

"Egad, I know not where to get it, Kelly, and almost doubt the existence of such a sum."

Kelly shrugged his shoulders as in doubt. Sheridan rung the bell, ordered the carriage, which was already in waiting, and without saying a word, beckoned Kelly to follow him.

The carriage was ordered to Ransom and Moreland's, Pall Mall.

"My good sir," cried Kelly, despairingly, "if that is your resource it will fail you, the effort

will be made in vain, and your application refused not only uncourteously but repulsively."

Sheridan made no reply, and with perfect nonchalance turned the conversation to the state of the weather.

On arriving at the bankers, Sheridan stept out of the carriage, desiring Kelly to wait. In the positive assurance of no money from that quarter, Kelly sat for the next half hour by no means in a state of incertitude; questioning whether at that period of the day, then nearly three o'clock, any other scheme could be devised by which the money could be raised to meet the time; his only hope being that he might prevail on Sheridan to meet the Corps Operatiques at the theatre in the evening, when probably he might prevail upon them to resume their duties. The reappearance of Sheridan emerging from the doors of the banking house reawakened his anxiousness, which increased as he approached the carriage with the coolest indifference, though a matter in which his interests were so closely interwoven.

"I have kept you waiting, Kelly," he said, "but there," handing him the notes, "is the three thousand pounds you require, and my carriage is at your service to take you where you wish; for

myself, I am going to White's, and probably may visit you in the evening." Saying this, he walked away, leaving poor Michael in a state of bewilderment not easily described.

It will be clearly evident that a vast amount of power must have rested in that masterly mind, which in its pliancy and knowledge of human nature could bend it to its will, and even overrule the stern banker in his decisions—for that the house of Moreland and Co. had declined the accommodation required by Kelly in the most unequivocal manner can hardly be questioned; though they promptly met the requirement of Sheridan on his own personal application, without the deposit of any positive security for so large an amount as three thousand pounds, surprising. Was the house of Moreland and Co. so lax in their credits as to scatter their wealth without that caution so necessary to the business of banking, and so invariably accordant with its established usages? Not so. On the contrary, prudence was and is the motto of the house which has sustained it for nearly a century of its growth, during all the fluctuations, panics, and changes which have convulsed the monetary institutions of the great metropolis. Sheridan had no deposit to make beyond that of his own note, payable in seven days, to be re-

deemed out of the growing receipts of the Opera house. Sheridan's credit with the house was his *honour* in not diverting any part of the receipts of the establishment from the channel into which it had hitherto flowed until its incumbrance had been relieved; consequently his note of hand was good, and it wanted but this pledge to assure him of the advance required. The House was secured, his honour was pledged, and upon the authority of the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, a partner in the house, his pledge of honour was never violated.

"I know not," said Kinnaird, on being referred to by Thomas Moore, the biographer, "how he managed it, or by what magic he created those large sums of which he stood in such constant need, and which, while meeting the pressure of the day, left him struggling on the next, with unabated courage, without the least expression of weariness in pursuit, but with the same smiles of contentment and good humour, the same gaiety, life, and spirit with which he entered the drawing room, or joined in the convivial mirth of a social dinner party."

The fact was that Sheridan, who could never be brought to the curtailment of his expenses, or an investigation of his resources, could never obtain a complete mastery over his first diffi-

culties; they haunted him in new forms, in consecutive changes: to which he became so much habituated that they never teazed him in their ugliness or disturbed him in his equanimity; they were the every day attendant, the companion of his hours, without which his hours would have languished in intolerable leisure. Sheridan took his bodily and mental rest in bed—up and stirring, he must be doing—the mind, incessant in its action, must meet with employment, and it is to be lamented that he had no corrective power over its lively influences to guide him to a better and more healthful development of its rich and varied stores.

The facility and ease with which he overcame embarrassments crushing to most men, rendered them light and trifling, as mere pastime to him, and necessary to that mental action, which could not accommodate itself to pursuits more consistent with the duties demanded of him in his domestic management, and in the development of those unequalled powers with which nature had invested him.

In the anecdotes we have related, we have not been so much actuated by the desire of recording them as amusing pleasantries, as that of illustrating or rather delineating the man in his habitual thoughtlessness, his entire negligence of self,

and the openness of the hand, which met the object of charity on the threshold, and administered to it spontaneously. Our object is to pourtray Sheridan as he was—in himself—in his actions, guided by his own influences, governed by no prudential rules; involved in the vortex of a gay and fashionable society, allowing but little time for reflection, scrambling through the evils of each recurring day, without abatement of their pressure inconsistently consistent, if we may so use the expression, always hilarious and gay, warmed by excitement, and cheered onward by those casual resources which never failed him in any exigency.

The true character of the author is very rarely to be estimated by the moral quality of his works; the mind, when developed by the exercise of the pen, is seldom the mind which exhibits itself in its course of action in the ordinary occurrences of an active life. In the former case it exhibits itself in its reflective powers, the richness of its imagination, and the brilliance of its thought; in the latter, in its natural impulses, unrestrained by reasoning, in the natural flow of the animal spirits, ungoverned, or rather unguided, by reflection. To arrive, therefore, at a correct knowledge of the true dispositions of Sheridan, we must follow him in his adventures, and not

glean him from his works, although in his dramatic productions we are enabled to arrive at a better estimate than can be drawn by comparison with any other author, as deduced from his labour.

We have yet another anecdote which we give on the authority of Michael Kelly, and the truth of which is unquestionably exhibitive of that extraordinary influence which he could exercise over a creditor. In some necessary repairs, alterations, and refittings of the Italian Opera House, Sheridan had delegated Kelly to select some paperhangings, &c., for the boxes of the theatre above mentioned, according to his own taste, from the warehouse of Henderson and Co., of Old Bond Street. Thus authorised, Kelly selected the articles required, and superintended the work to its completion. In due course the bill was sent in to the proprietor, but no notice was taken of it; but whether it had passed under the eye of the careless proprietor, or if he ever knew of the repeated applications for its payment seems a matter of doubt. That fatal bag, the recipient of all communications made to the manager, whether of a public or private nature, was seldom examined but upon emergency, and had remained now, as it appeared, gorged with its contents for several weeks. Henderson, irritated at the

shameful neglect with which he had been treated; after consulting with his lawyer, under whose advice he acted, sued out a writ against poor Michael, who at that time, on the close of the operatic season, was playing an engagement at the Birmingham Theatre.

It was between five and six o'clock in the evening of one of his performances, when he was preparing for his part, that a sheriff's officer waited on him with the customary salutation, and the polite request that he would accompany him to his lock-up, where he would be carefully held in trust until the claim should be discharged, or sufficient bail to the satisfaction of the officer should be rendered. Kelly, taken wholly by surprise and unprepared to meet the demand, which was not only unexpected but unjust, inasmuch as he had no interest in the property of the theatre, but had merely acted under the direction of, and for, and on account of the proprietor, was exceedingly perplexed, and entirely at a loss for the means of obtaining his extrication: he pleaded, protested, but in vain, the law's executive was inexorable; to safe quarters for safe keeping he must go; the good play-going people of Birmingham must forego their entertainment of that evening, and Kelly had no resource left but to communicate with the manager and expose his embarrassing condition. The missile was dis-

patched, but the manager was not on hand; the doors had been opened for the reception of the visitors, and all was consternation behind the scenes in the absence of the operatic hero. The manager was sent for in every direction, where it was hoped he might be found; at length he made his appearance at the time when an uproarious gallery audience was bawling out in discordant cries, "Music! music!"

The offending missile, which had been thrust into his hands, was broken open with impetuous haste, and "What's to be done?" was hastily ejaculated by the disconsolate purveyor of operatic drama. "What's to be done?" was responded by the prompter and echoed by the choristers, while the shouts, and whistlings, and stamping of the gallalerians shook the whole house to its foundation. "Something must be done, and that immediately," cried the embarrassed manager; "you must apologize to the audience," addressing himself to the acting manager, "while I go to Kelly and obtain his release; you must solicit their patience, and modestly hint at the possibility of some accident which has befallen Kelly, who has hitherto never neglected his duty to the public." All this was well arranged, but unfortunately the circumstance of the arrest had got wind, and the apology was

received with peals of laughter and groans for the sheriff depute.

In the meantime the manager hastened to the "lock-up," accompanied by a friend, who was willing to join him in a bail bond, and after the usual preliminaries and the payment of the accustomed fees, Michael was allowed to breathe the free air. Kelly's arrival at the theatre was duly announced, amid much uproar among the dissatisfied gods, who appeared to enjoy the joke and exhibit their merriment in clamour directed against the management, against Mike, and equally against the objectionable sheriff, who, without "the fear of the people before his eyes," had dared to interrupt their pastimes and amusements. Kelly, as may be imagined, was not in full voice on this memorable occasion, or in theatrical parlance, "up to his part;" he appeared however, and was well received, but strenuously called upon by some wags, who had posted themselves in conspicuous situations, to account for his keeping the audience in waiting, and apologizing for his omission, on which, approaching the foot-lights, assuming a very solemn countenance, he delivered himself in nearly the following words:—

"Ladies and gentlemen,—I deeply deplore the circumstance—(a hearty laugh)—which has called down upon me your censure. I assure

you no one can feel more keenly than myself—(immoderate laughter)—the unhappy cause of my absence here in this place at the precise time, when my duties called me. I have not been in the practice of neglecting those duties so imperatively demanded of me by you, my most kind and indulgent patrons and friends. You will, therefore, I am sure, attribute my absence to circumstances which I could not control, and not to any culpable cause." ("Hear, hear," and continued laughter.) Some one cried out from the boxes, "The sheriff, Kelly! the sheriff!" to which the actor, with great good humour responded, "Exactly so. An official of that august personage waited on me at the precise time when I was preparing myself to appear before you. He had such a taking way with him that I was bound to submit to his intreaties. I protested in vain, but he protested that we could not part company; so, *nolens volens*, I felt compelled to accompany him to his iron-bound home, he facetiously observing that he believed it to be the first time he had ever caged a nightingale. (Roars of laughter.) In this condition it became absolutely necessary to satisfy the claims of this respectable functionary to the possession of my person. Our excellent manager effected this, proving at the same time that he had the stronger claims of the two.

So here I am before you in discharge of my professional duties; and I do most earnestly intreat of you to believe that I am wrongfully charged with a debt which I never contracted, for which I am in no way amenable, and which I shall defend, in the sure conviction that the laws of our common country, in their perfect administration, will do me justice."

This address was received with the greatest favour, occasionally interrupted by peals of laughter, in which the actor in several instances joined.

The evening's performances were terminated with great good humour; much forbearance had been exhibited towards its imperfection. Kelly says he was wholly out of voice, and the presence of the bailiff haunted him in each scene. Mrs. Crouch, Kelly's *chere ami*, equally affected by the event, vowed vengeance upon poor Sheridan as the cause of their unlooked-for troubles.

A letter was despatched immediately to the great offender, couched in no measured terms, with the word *immediate* on its superscription, and strict directions that it should be delivered into his own hands. This was the more necessary, as knowing Sheridan's habitual negligence, and it was issued in defiance of the cavernous monster bag.

Sheridan, on its receipt and perusal at that inconvenient hour, when he had scarcely awoke from his first morning's slumbers, exclaimed, "Too bad, too bad! Mike captured at the 'Siege of Belgrade,'" the name of the operatic performance of the evening; but he proceeded immediately to remedy the evil, so far as it lay within his power, and sent for Henderson to explain his conduct in the matter. Henderson promptly attended. Sheridan began—"Mr. Henderson, I have received a letter from Mr. Michael Kelly, my manager at the Opera House, complaining of a most offensive measure instituted at your hands, by which he was deprived of his liberty, and at a time when his professional reputation was jeopardised, and he himself exposed to the indignation of a disappointed audience. Serious affair, Mr. Henderson, very serious affair, involving consequences which we may conjecture, but cannot actually estimate. I have sent for you, Mr. Henderson, for whom I have the highest respect, with a view to some explanation of your, in my opinion, inexplicable conduct, and, if possible, to prevent those serious consequences which must result to you from a legal investigation of the facts of this extraordinary case of illegal arrest and false imprisonment. I am your friend, Mr. Henderson—have sent for

you as your friend, meet you as your friend, and am desirous of hearing from your own lips your explanation of this violent proceeding, having no precedent in our reports of legal cases."

"In this matter, Mr. Sheridan, I have acted under the advice of my legal adviser. I furnished my goods to the order of Mr. Michael Kelly at cash prices. They were furnished to the Italian Opera by his direction, and formed the material decorations of that theatre. I sent in my bill on the completion of the work, agreeable to his instructions; but, although I have repeatedly applied for payment, and have written until my patience was exhausted, I have never received the slightest notice of my demand."

"And to whom did you write, Mr. Henderson? of whom did you demand payment? Did you ever apply to Kelly?"

"To speak the truth, I did not apply to Kelly, —my applications were to you, according to his directions, as manager and proprietor, but all my requests were unattended to. I could obtain no satisfaction, and I had no alternative but to sue Kelly for the amount of my bill."

"To me! I have never heard one word of the matter, save that the work was admirably executed, in excellent taste, and good, workmanlike manner; but that is feeble commendation,

since it is well known the celebrity of the house of Henderson for the beautiful if not sublime execution of the higher works of art."

Henderson bowed in acknowledgment of the well-directed panacea, and it is to be questioned whether the actual payment of his bill would have been received at the time with more heart-felt satisfaction. Sheridan saw the effect he had produced, and improved upon it, adding gravely:

"How much I am mortified, Mr. Henderson, I can scarcely express, that your name, standing so high as it does in public estimation, should have its brightness sullied by such an incident as this, brought about by the influence of a lawyer, whose opinion is rendered under the requirements of his purse. Tailors and lawyers, you know, friend Henderson, live by suits, but in this suit you will most assuredly be non-suited."

Henderson did not feel quite comfortable in contemplating the high standing of his name, so eloquently elevated by the great M.P., with its possible degradation by the act which had brought about the then present meeting. He began to feel some doubt about his position, and in an expostulatory tone, replied, "What else could I do under such circumstances?"

"You should have seen me on the subject."

"But I could not get to see you. I called repeatedly."

"Then you should have written; because I am your real debtor, and you might as well have brought suit against my footman as against Kelly, who was no more than my servant, obeying his master's orders in this unfortunate transaction."

"But I did write, again and again, and naturally concluded, by receiving no answer, that Kelly had acted without your orders, and was solely responsible."

"Strange, very strange," replied Sheridan, musingly; "I never had the slightest intimation of your having called, or received any letter, bill, or paper, bearing your signature."

But it was not strange, as the cormorant bag could testify; said bag being then present in silent repose upon the centre table of the parlour, in which they were seated. Sheridan for a moment cast a reproachful eye upon the monster, then emptying its contents upon the table, exposed the unread missiles to the searching eye of Henderson, who, recognizing his own hand-writing among the mass, selected them for perusal. The whole business was almost immediately settled. Sheridan apologized for his omissions, adding, "I really receive so many teasing applications from authors, actors, scene-painters, scene-shifters, check-takers, &c., &c., on the one hand, and place-hunters, and office-seekers, and hungry

politicians on the other; that I tremble to venture on the perusal of the correspondence with which I am daily inundated. In future, my dear sir, whenever you address me, be sure to add to the endorsement, '*private and important.*'"

Henderson began to grow in great good humour with himself, sitting more perfectly at his ease, and only anxious about the adjusting of his suit with Kelly; from some apprehensions that, although acting advisedly, he had adopted a course not sound in policy; while Sheridan, resolved on settling the proceedings without delay, vividly painting in such glowing colours the gross violation of law he had committed, with the heavy damages with which he would be visited, and the loss of that high reputation which he had acquired for his house of business, in its integrity and honour, that the unhappy tradesman took the alarm, and beseeched his debtor to interfere in his behalf, and save him from the impending perils which hung over him, like the sword of Damocles.

Sheridan, at the time of this occurrence, was exceedingly hard pressed, having choked up his accustomed resources, with no treasury into which to dip his hand without imperilling the weekly pay list of his theatres. It was an awkward state of his affairs and he had already decided on

hazarding the chance of relief by means of the bewildered Henderson, who sat upon thorns while the discussion was being continued. Sheridan broke ground cautiously on this part of the subject, but Henderson was caught, and it was ultimately agreed upon that the suit should be discharged against Kelly, and Sheridan was to give his note for the payment of the bill, with the addition of a sum of two hundred pounds to be added to the amount, as a friendly loan to Sheridan for his kind interference in this untoward matter, and for which Henderson handed over his cheque. The business being arranged, the parties separated, and the same night's mail took to Birmingham Kelly's discharge.

Henderson was highly satisfied with the arrangement, and expressed himself in the strongest terms of approbation of the noble conduct of the man who had called himself his friend, and whom he was proud to consider really so.

Sheridan's note to Kelly was trite to the purpose:—

"I have seen Henderson, have satisfied him of the injustice of his suit; you are discharged from all responsibilty. He has taken my note for the amount, and accomodated me with a loan of

two hundred pounds. Peake is happy. Salaries will be paid.

"SHERIDAN."

No man but Sheridan could have so easily extricated himself from the difficulties under which he laboured, or have procured so readily a discharge to an action, which it is presumed might have been successfully maintained. Sheridan made his note payable at his bankers, and happily there were assets on hand at the period when it became due, but it is doubted whether Sheridan ever gave an after thought on the matter, and looking only to his balances without any investigation of the accounts, whether he ever knew of the existence of the bill or of its payment.

CHAPTER XII.

SHERIDAN'S MANAGEMENT—MRS. SIDDON—THE CORPS DRAMATIQUE—CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF DRAMA—THE SALUTATION TAVERN—WIDOW BUTLER—THE DUKE OF ORLEANS—THE PRINCE'S DEBTS.

THE history of the stage points out the period of Sheridan's management as if not the most successful, at least unequalled in the merit of its candidates for histrionic fame; it was the period of its greatness when the public was invited to witness the representation of classic drama, clothed in all its parts with appropriate taste, delineated with a truthfulness to nature, by a company complete in all its parts, blending their united talent in support of the mimic scene, charming and delighting an auditory by their varied excellence. In the cast of characters, the greatest attention was paid to the fitness of the performer to the character he was to assume; there were no stars, according to theatrical phraseology, no star of the night, the magnate of attraction; but

a galaxy of stars, each revolving in their own orbit; shedding their own light in illustration of the author's lines, and in the full expression of those impassioned thoughts which gives to poetry its inspiring charm.

Siddons, the great, the immortal Siddons, lovely in person, formed and moulded for her profession; with a countenance beaming expression, dissolving in tenderness, or—in the divine majesty of the tragic muse, as the inexorable wife of the Scottish thane, or the soft and chaste wife of Beverley! with a mind glowing with the inspirations of the muse. She was no star, magnified in the bills of announcement, but was recorded there as one of the unequalled histrionic corps, who were called upon to sustain Shakespeare in the embodiment of his vast conceptions; the public was not called upon to witness perfection on the one hand, and the glaring imperfections of pretenders disfiguring the scene upon the other; but to see a whole play cast in all its parts, with all the talent managerial influence could procure. It was the play that was offered as the attraction with an efficient company in its support.

It was the great feature of Sheridan's management, that, following in the steps of his great and able predecessor David Garrick, he encouraged

talent, afforded ample opportunity for its development, and nursed it in its early aspirations. If we look back upon the past history of the drama we shall find that at no former, or on any subsequent period, was it ever so effectually sustained by the united action of its professors: combining the classic Kemble, the great successor of a Garrick, with John Palmer, the universal favorite, Wroughton, Barrymore, Bensley, John Banister, Edwin, Suet, with Miss Farren, afterwards the Countess of Derby, Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Powel, *cume multis aliis*, each in themselves a star of magnitude, and hardly approached in the present day, by the Thespian itinerants, who are heralded forth as in the highest order of histrionic art. The theatre was the fashion of those the legitimate days of Drury, when the actors as a class were well educated to the profession; and brought with them the well-earned reputation they had acquired under provincial management, before they could be received on the boards hallowed by a Garrick, a Cibber, and a Henderson. Those days are past, and legitimate drama may be truly said to be no more; it may be read in our closets, but it no longer dignifies the stage. Sheridan, with excellent judgment, and unequalled taste, although apparently indolent, never relaxed in his necessary exertions to secure

the higher interests of the stage under his management, and by that means the patronage of a discerning public. The sterling comedies of a Holcroft, an Inchbald, and a Cumberland, were successively introduced, and were admirably acted; but whatever might be their relative merits they obtained no permanence on the boards in the want of that lifefulness which characterised the "School for Scandal," and "The Rivals," and which left their impression upon the public mind not easily to be effaced.

It is an axiom, verified by experience in its practice, that the public taste is governed by the food provided for it; and is elevated or vitiated by the excitement promoted by the caterer. In those good old days, when the pit of our theatres was the resort of such men as Dr. Samuel Johnson, the most distinguished of our literati, and the classical critic; the drama, disclothed of the impurities of an earlier age, stood in the highest rank of inspired art, in the embodiment of the poet's vast conceptions, and in the enchantment of its moral teachings. It was the censors of the stage that gave the tone to public opinion; that restrained the management in its violations; and rebuked or cherished the rising actor in the exercise of his studies. Without study no man can ever become even a tolerable

actor; we do not mean that study which in theatrical phraseology is called "swallowing a part," but that which applies to the author's intentions in the drawing the character to be represented. In this consists the whole merit of the actor otherwise qualified by nature for the part he is called upon to assume, that quick conception which can personify and give the realities of life to the beings of imaginative creation.

It has formed no part of our intention to furnish out a history of the stage, the period of its classic greatness, or the causes which have led to its decline and fall, but to mark out that distinguished era when Sheridan presided over the temple devoted to Shakespeare, and which a Garrick had adorned in the splendour of his unequalled powers.

Sheridan's management was consistent, but attended with no force; his own pen was idle, and he lacked in the materials demanded of him in the production of novelties. The writers for the stage were feeble in comparison with their predecessors. Tragedy was mere fustian, and comedy a drivelling effort of the muse in ill humour, made up of mawkish sentiment, unnatural surprises, and melo-dramatic incidents; they palled upon the public taste, gleaming in, here

and there, like phantoms of a night, leaving not a shadow behind to remind you of their having had existence. Still the theatre sustained itself, if not with much eclat, at least, with that amount of success keeping pace with its weekly expenditures, and a moderate compensation to the proprietary, produced rather by the combination of the professors of the artistic art in the sustention of the whole of the drama under representation than the actual merits of the drama itself; this is clearly proved in the short existence of those novelties of the day, which, however successful, scarcely ever survived the first season, and are now wholly unremembered, recorded only in the dramatic register.

Sheridan, although urgently pressed by Linley, could not be prevailed upon to resume his pen; and it is greatly to be questioned whether in the change which was taking place in the public taste, when the scene painter and the machinist were called into requisition to supply the deficiences of poetry and the decline of genius; we repeat, it is greatly to be questioned whether the pen of a Sheridan could have added to the fame he had acquired; or done more than protract for a period, the stage in its legitimate pursuits, then evidently approaching its decline and fall. The guardian of his own fame he felt little disposed

to risk it on adventure: independent of which he was too much absorbed in the political struggles of the day, and too much devoted to his pleasure, to give more than a very small portion of his time to the drama.

As an M.P., Sheridan's associations became much enlarged, and his leisure contracted, his habitual thoughtlessness more confirmed, and so to speak, his habits of indulgence increased; his home, with all its charms, was no longer the centre of attraction; his lovely wife, though still adored, could no longer bind the rover; courted and admired by the dashing spirits of the day, who won him over by allurements which, in the condition of his volatile and versatile mind, were not easily contracted, he became enthralled in their meshes, revelled in their luxuriance, and gave way to no thought in his fitful day-dreams. The Prince of Wales in the hey-day of his youth, and on the attainment of his majority, which took place on the twelfth day of August, in '83, had admitted him to his confidence, had accepted him as a friend and adviser, as a participator in his merriments, the companion of his frolics; we are not to condemn if we cannot approve of a conduct, somewhat equivocal if found in a sentimentalist, but to be palliated in the contemplation of a man whose lightness of heart had been

subjected to no guidance, and whose head was wreathed with the laurels which his genius had won, who had never known anything of the maxims of a counting house training.

George, Prince of Wales, the modern Prince Hal, the type of that royal son of the fourth Henry, which Shakspeare so ably drew from the records and traditions which had been handed down to his own days; was the master spirit of the age, the meteor which gleamed in the horizon, the magnet that drew around it the brilliant in wit and the joyous in soul. Himself in the pride of his youth, the most elegant in person, and the most accomplished in the elegant arts, in the social qualities and suavity of manners, most becoming in a man in his elevated position. Brilliant in wit, highly educated, almost unapproachable in classical attainments, excepting in the case of those collegiates trained to professional pursuits, he might well be pronounced the gentleman of the day, the gentleman *par excellence*, glowing in animal spirits, yielding no bound to their exuberance; it might be regretted that he did not at all times preserve the dignity of his station, while, at the same time, it cannot be charged against him that, in his social relationship with society, he ever forgot in his deportment what was due to the dignity of the well-bred gentleman.

Can it be wondered at that Sheridan, attracted by such powers himself, a wit among wits, should range within their sphere, and centre within its rays. The Prince, the heir apparent to the throne of England, the elegant and the accomplished; the wonder would be rather that he could have resisted the temptations placed before him, with the allurements of those honours and that patronage which are dazzling to the eyes of the favourites of princes: but the wonder will be with every investigator of Sheridan, in his life and transactions, that he should have preserved his independence under such circumstances, and in the greatness of his spirit never crouched for favor, or sought that patronage which could not but have been accorded him. In all things self-reliant, too proud to bend, he never could submit to the condition of the courtier. It was the pride of his heart that he had never taken advantage of his position, or sought a favour at the hands of royalty.

In a court leading from Tavistock-street to Covent-garden, and well known as Tavistock-court, there still stands the old tavern house, then and still known as the SALUTATION TAVERN, which, like the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, with its Dame Quickly, 'mine hostess,' was not less respectably kept by my modern hostess, Dame Butler,

or Mother Butler, as her more frequent appellative. The house is sadly changed of late, no longer the resort of choice spirits, who "were wont to keep the table in a roar," and its adjacency in an uproar, but silent, modest, and retiring, with a slender light gleaming through a solitary pane, indicating refreshment within, or a glass at the bar, if called for. It is a melancholy light—dark, tallowy, and like unto that which is perched on a dead man's bier, or the funeral ceremonies which shall have consigned it to its final resting place. It is a melancholy house, sombre by day, sad and gloomy, which even the mid-day sun cannot enliven, and still more sombred by the darkening shadows of the night hanging over it in misty folds, partially revealing it in its old-fashioned outline. The scythe of time has nipped it in the greenness of its age, cobwebbed and tarnished by the density of an overcharged atmosphere, fœted with the exhalations of the adjoining market; no longer the resort of the roysterer —the dashing spirit of that bygone age, when, to break lamps and crack the crowns of antiquated Charleys, who, in their infirmness, were delegated as conservators of the peace, was the fashion with the hair-brained, and the pastime of the unruly. The times have changed, the age has passed away; gas has lighted up our alleys and our courts; the lamps flickering, unsteady

and glimmering, have departed with the venerable brotherhood, who had been constituted for the preservation of the peace, but who were, in fact, the victims of misrule.

A sturdy and efficient police, in their establishment, have effaced from all but memory these relics of the days now no more, and which have passed away for ever. When the Prince of Wales had attained to the age of manhood, the roystering spirit of the young nobility was in the full bent of its vigour, and it may be fairly claimed for him that he did not become the founder of a system of misrule which was already framed to his hand; but in the joyousness of his nature, the vigour of his animal spirits, and the restlessness of his desire for the pleasurable enjoyments of the town, he voluntarily yielded himself to the courses of a wild life, and, disdaining to become a follower in the train, tendered himself as its leader. With such a spirit, harmonising, in some of its points, so closely with his own, we may easily imagine, in the unity of their spirit, that Sheridan, the highly favoured and highly sought friend and favourite, should be mixed up with the Prince in some of those strange adventures which marked the character of the age, and the loose state of the public morals.

With no intent to attaint the men who are now no more, or to cast upon their memory a blight, leaving them in the defenceless position of the grave to bear the shafts of malice and invention, we assume a higher ground; and, in our short narration of the passing events of their days, to rescue them from the obliquity of vision of their censors, whose partial sight cannot be brought to penetrate beyond the surface of the act; and so, to give it its fair complexion, society is but little benefited by their lucubrations, but, on the contrary, demoralised by their inventions. The Prince had many faults, the faults of youth, but he had many redeeming points, such as in a less elevated position would have brightened into perspicuity. Always involved in the embarrassments consequent on a wasteful expenditure, and an otherwise reckless pursuit of expensive pleasures, Sheridan, the friend, the confidential adviser, the parliamentary advocate of his Royal Highness in the question of his allowance, and its inadequacy to the state and dignity of the Heir Apparent, was too much thrown in his way to escape the effects of his social influence, and too much inclined to the temptation of his example to resist its temptations.

To narrate truthfully is not to scandalize, to detail faithfully is not to freshen the tongue of

slander, which had at one time prevailed; but to soften the keenness of its edge, and temper it to the facts, neither distorted out of shape on the one hand, or so misstated on the other as to be scarcely recognized in their disfigurement. We may palliate what we cannot excuse, but we will not condemn in the spirit of condemnation without inquiry into the catalogue of causes and effects, and drawing into deduction those extraneous facts which might be fairly brought into the balance and freely discussed without imputation on our candour. With these few remarks, which are hazarded for the purpose of rescuing ourselves from the equivocal position into which we may be considered to have placed ourselves in delineating the characters of the distinguished individuals, the subject of our chapter, we shall proceed to narrate one or two incidents in the lives of these gentlemen, in connection with the Salutation Tavern, illustrative of each in the days of their youthful follies; for the Prince had scarcely attained his majority, and for Sheridan himself, we may be allowed to say, although of riper years, not less buoyant in spirit, or actively young in the exercise of his wit and humour, his thirst for frolic, and his total thoughtlessness of expense in the gratification of his appetite for convivial enjoyments, for in this alone consisted his follies and his frailties.

The Salutation Tavern, now no longer ringing with the joyous laugh in the carousals of those choicer and selected spirits of the days when England's Prince and future King sat in the old oak chair of the Widow Butler, discarding all of royalty, and, like Prince Hal of old, Falstaff's own Hal, federating with the master spirits who had been admitted to his presence, to share in his revelry, with unrestrained freedom to enjoy the hours allotted to wit, to wine, and frolicsome adventure. That old oak chair still, we believe, remains in the wainscotted room on the floor above the bar; with its cumbrous stairway, and its massive bannisters, conducting from the door of entrance in the antiquated court, and leading to the famous market of far-famed Covent Garden. The room, or parlour, or hall of state, or by whatever name it may be called, is but slightly changed from what it was. It is now some fourteen years since we visited it, and it then retained all of its former self, neither, as it appeared to us, bleached by age or impoverished by time. The same cumbrous chairs stood side by side, arranged in solemn order round a centre table, laden, to be sure, with pipes and tobacco boxes, paper matches neatly rolled up and fancifully displayed, with the well-sanded spittoon of modern taste, conveniently placed to meet the

requirements of the smoker. These are the changes which the altered times have made in the order of progress, by which the popular world, it is assumed, is fast advancing to perfection, in morals, manners, the useful arts, and the practical science of modern philosophy, and general diffusion of useful knowledge. For our own parts, with our contracted notions, which with us we may claim to be hereditary, we looked upon these changes as desecrations of the spot which had been devoted to revelry of a higher order, to classic wit and social refinement; as the mere fungus which had sprung up from the roots of decay, or the popular world in its transition state, working out a new order of things, in the immolation of ancient institutions, of ancient customs, and of ancient manners. While we cannot approve of intemperance in any form, we are blinded to the advantage resulting from any change productive of a greater for a lesser evil, the substitution of a grosser sensuality for that which was indulged in by intellect in its refinement.

Mrs. Butler—the Widow Butler, as she was called—was the very personification of mine hostess, Dame Quickly—blithe, active, comely in person, if not to say handsome, was the only attendant permitted to enter the sanctum of those

transcendant wits who here held their court incognito.

The Widow Butler was an extraordinary woman—a beauty in her youth, and still retaining, in her advancing years, the freshness and the bloom which had distinguished her in her early life; uneducated, but of a vigorous mind, unaccomplished, but energetic, and distinguished by a peculiar suavity of manners, rendering her to rank amongst the most interesting of her sex. She was not beautiful according to the rule which demands that the features should become a unity in their fair proportions of the human countenance, composing the whole, and uniting in one general expression—she was not a beauty, but a most charming woman, always in temper with herself, the very picture of good humour, obedient and obliging. She was an especial favourite with her guests, and more particularly with those choice spirits who had selected her "crib" for their social carousals, and dignity was cast aside for the pleasurable enjoyments of an evening *en dishabille*. The world had spoken rather slightingly of her, and certain whisperings on the quality of her guests, which had leaked abroad, were adduced as signs and evidences of her fallibility. No matter, the smiling widow moved on in her regular course, self-satisfied and indifferent to

impeachment. Though we verily believe the world had done her wrong—still the world continued to do her that wrong without one tittle of evidence to justify report. She was the wardrobe keeper, the lady of the chamber, and the lady in waiting. She was the actuary in everything, the superintendant in everything appertaining to the social circle holding court in the oaken chamber of the old Salutation.

She is gone; the grave has closed over her, and nothing remains to keep up the remembrance of her ever having been. But if her spirit, which passed away at the dread command and by the power of laws inscrutable, if it could return, and for a moment hover around her old accustomed home, pained at its desecration, would, if still endowed with mortal eyes to weep or tears to shed, depart in agony of grief, never again to hover over the spot.

Of the mysteries of that old oak chamber we can say but little; time has thrown over them an impenetrable veil. We know that its members were more select than numerous, and that none but members could be admitted to its privacies; that its nightly sittings seldom commenced before midnight, and rarely ever closed before the hour of day-dawn.

It was in this room dignity was brought to

bend; in other words, to fraternise with the brilliant in wit and the disciple of mirth. It was the rendezvous when the theatres were closed, where plots were hatched against the peaceable guardians of the night, the ancient Charleys, dozing on their posts, and where campaigns were planned into the most questionable regions, where poverty, and crime, and vice, in every grade, mingled together in squalid misery or in obdurate daring, in violation of all law, springing from one common hotbed, nurtured by drunkenness in its most detestable form, debaucheries in their foulness, and disease in its hideousness. It was a strange taste!—the haunts of the common felon, whose den lay hidden in the filthiness of old St. Giles's, its narrow streets, or lanes, or courts, whose crumbling houses, tottering to their fall, were without doors, and more frequently without windows, whose roofs were patched with rags, and such materials as might be brought to intercept the passage of the wet, through the apertures which time had made, and indolence and apathy had increased. But the burning incense of alcoholic liquors steaming from the hot breath of the lost to shame, and abandoned profligate, before whose disordered eyes rested nothing but vice in its deformity and wretchedness in its filth, where the Word of God was

unknown, and his name was never mentioned but in profanation; there the fœtid steam ascends, hanging round the damp walls, and, mingling with the miasma of disease, transfigures a doomed death in its most appalling form.

It was a strange taste, that of exploring these deplorable regions, if prompted by no other desire than that of satisfying a morbid curiosity, unattended by the redeeming virtue of seeming to be satisfied, and examining, to amend. Heaven alone knows if such a motive actuated the Prince in his nocturnal rambles occasionally so devoted, but the after acts of his regency and reign justify the belief that, if the motive did not exist at the time, an impression was made upon the mind, which ultimately developed itself in the elaborate works which he suggested, and energetically superintended: by which the great metropolis has been materially cleansed, purified, and beautified, by which the wretched dens of vice and suffering have been removed, and a sanative policy secured.

Too prone to condemn, we rarely approve that which in the exercise of a less partial judgment we should as warmly commend. The Prince had many failings, found rather in the indulgence of passions which were suffered without restraint, than in an actual viciousness; enthusiastic in his

youth, with a vigorous constitution, and an amazing flow of animal spirits, a person distinguished for its elegant proportions, and a manly countenance beaming with intelligence and good nature; admired by all, beloved, courted, followed more particularly by the ladies most celebrated for their beauty and fashion, if not for their virtue, it may be started whether in the glow of his youth, and the warmth of his heart, amid the temptations with which he was surrounded, he was not much more sinned against than sinning. Be this as it may, shunning the array of state in relief of the demands of rank and fashion, with its constant round of intoxications in which he knew nothing of the world but through the medium of the courtier, he flew to that secret home which he could visit as a home, with a few gay spirits in harmony with his own, where he could revel at his ease as a man among men, and in the assumption of disguises by which his rank could be concealed, he could render himself familiar with that humbler world, of which he knew so little but by report. He mingled with his frailties many amiable qualities, which, if obscured by their unchecked growth in youth, still bloomed forth in their freshness in his after reign, hence it is but in charity to presume that in his singular visitations to the avenues of misery and vice, he

was actuated by a nobler principle than that of a mere curiosity in beholding what he had no desire to amend.

The members of the Salutation Club, or, in other words, the associates of that little compacted body of erratic souls, were comprised of the Prince, his favourite and unflinching friend, Sheridan, Charles, the Earl of Surrey, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, Selwyn, Hare, and Charles James Fox—these were the regulars of initiation, to which number must be added, as an irregular or noviciate of the order, the no less celebrated Duke of Orleans, the darling cousin of Louis XVI. of France. The Prince and the Duke had formed a close intimacy; alike in habits and alike in tastes, their close association drew upon them much of animadversion, and no slight amount of censure. The Prince was, to a certain extent, unfortunate in his connection with that most immoral and insidious person, who, uniting with the licentiousness of the court of France the intriguing spirit of an ambitious politician; who, influenced by no feeling of honour or sympathy for sufferings, was governed only by self. Heartless, worthless, and depraved, with sufficient talent to conceal his designs under the hypocritical mask which he had assumed, who saw the throne tottering to the fall, aiding secretly, and by his minions in Paris, that destruction which

fell upon his house, and ultimately his own, on the same scaffold to which he had conducted his relative, the unfortunate Louis. With a blandness of manners, and affectation of generosity in the lavish expenditure of his abundant wealth, his readiness to join in every suggested dissipation, his eagerness to excite the languishing appetite of the Prince of Wales for expensive pleasures at a time when he was labouring under a heavy indebtedness, brought on by his extravagances, and the limited state of his resources—when he had incurred the severe displeasure of the King, his father, and was still further annoyed by the discussions in Parliament, in which he was as roundly censured: he pressed his poisons into the ear of his young, susceptible, and too confiding victim, inciting him to new courses, still widening the breach with the King, and strengthening his enemies in the House of Commons, until in the ripening of the seeds which he had sown (when the ministry supported by the House discarded his claims), he was left to combat with the violent clamour of unpaid creditors.

It was in this condition of his affairs that the wily Orleans tendered to pay the debts of the Prince, which were of enormous amount; and this offer was made with such apparent friendship and disinterestedness that it was readily accepted

upon the terms proposed, which were virtually to render the heir apparent to the Crown of England a dependant debtor to a Prince of France.

It is due to the sagacity of Sheridan, who took no part in this transaction, but who denounced it when on the point of consummation, and ultimately frustrated it by the force of his eloquence, and the power of his argument; it is due to him to aver that, while he received the courtesies of the Duke with corresponding politeness, he avoided all intercourse; on every occasion, in which he could exercise his own will without offence in that one quarter to which his friendship was devoted. He was often heard to express his deep regret that, notwithstanding his close and familiar intimacy with the Prince, he felt that he dared not approach him upon that one subject without endangering that open and free communion which had subsisted between them. The Duc d'Orleans, he was wont to say, was "a subtle and a dangerous man, devoted to intrigue. He united in his veins the blood of the ape, the tiger, and the fox. The ape in his wantonness, the tiger in his ferocity, and the fox in his cunning; wholly soulless and insincere he was incapable of friendship; in his passions, sensual by instinct, and in their gratification, remorseless. He never made a friend but with the view of making him his victim; his wealth was his

capacity for intrigue, and the engine of his ambition. He employed it fearlessly in fanning the flames of rebellion in France, and exciting a treasonable conspiracy against the throne, and withal a coward of the meanest class. He could corrupt the caitiff he employed, but in his thorough heartlessness, however well concealed, he could never win to confidence one honest or independant man. In his carousals he was attractive; his hospitality was unbounded, but in all there was design! In the tumultuous proceedings in the French capital he had his emissaries, who constantly kept him apprized of the proceedings of the people, while he was waiting the opportunity of appearing among them as their leader, and through their instrumentality grasping at the French sceptre. As their tumults progressed he feared, he trembled at consequences which appeared threatening, but still as he hoped remote: in this apprehension was his offer made to the extent of the Prince's debts, thereby securing a part of his immense wealth in the event of a reversal of his fortunes, a home in exile, or a friend in the event of his relative's deposition, and his own elevation to the vacant throne."

Such were the opinions formed by Sheridan of the monster "Egalitie," who, upon the destruction of the Bastile, mingled with the insurgents, fed

by means of his purse the most ferocious revolution that had ever convulsed the world; who, in the intenseness of his ambition, carried out his designs, assuming to be one of the people, declaring himself to be a "citizen," and professing himself to be a firm, inflexible, uncompromising republican. It was in this daring and inhuman spirit that he gave his vote for the decapitation of his relative and sovereign, Louis XVI., but happily, in the inscrutable disposition of an eternal justice, the keen eyes of a Danton, a Robespiere, and a Marat were upon him; and when their own ends were served in the dissipation and ultimate confiscation of his fortunes, denounced him as a traitor to the Republic, and consigned him, in expiation of his revolting crimes, to that scaffold on which his relative's blood was spilt, and, in all probability, his fate precipitated—their own fall.

Sheridan's connexion with the Prince, although close and intimate, could not induce him to act the part of a counsellor in advisement in matters of a private nature. The Prince was young and headstrong, and withal exceedingly tenacious in all that pertained to his rank and condition, the discretionary power of selecting his associates according to his whim or humour. The Duke had ingratiated himself in the affections of his royal Highness by the indulgence of his passions,

the profusion of his purse, his apparent liberality, and, ultimately, by the liberal offer of relieving him from his embarrassments. The Prince's opinions and friendship were formed on these appearances, without lending himself to an investigation of the motives influencing a generosity which he conceived to be a glorious evidence of magnanimity of soul! Under such circumstances it would have been highly indecorous and unavailing, the intrusion of his advice; while, on the other hand, he determined on pursuing a course by which he could insure the continued favour of the Prince, preserve his own honour, and do his duty faithfully to his country.

The course he pursued in vindication of the Prince of Wales and his claims, form an interesting period in his parliamentary history; a clear view of his integrity of purpose; of his disinterested friendship; and his powerful advocacy of a cause the merits of which he believed in.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 March, 2016